

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

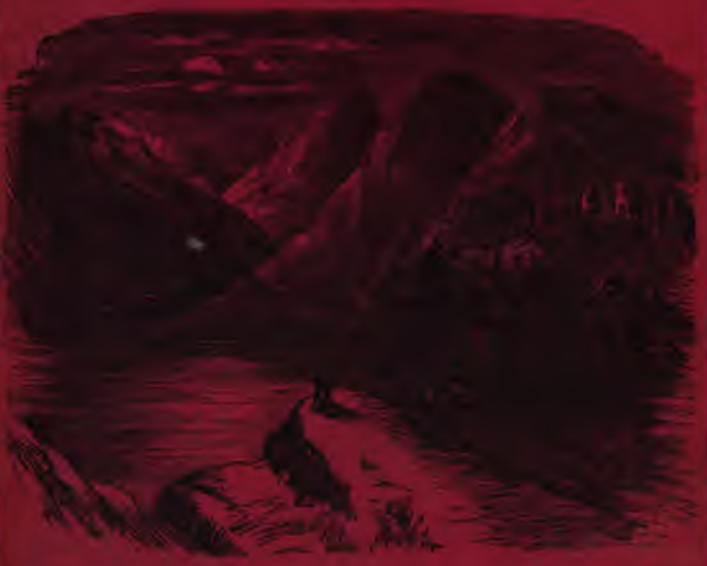
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

GLENNORA;

OR

The Castle, the Camp, and the Cottage.



BY

MRS. CECILIA BLAKE.

W. Tweedie, London.

600073674X




600073674X


BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE.

SIR RONALD MACDONALD 3

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW LAIRD AND HIS FAMILY 14

CHAPTER III.

THE GOVERNESS 23

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW MINISTER 31

CHAPTER V.

A MORNING WALK 41

CHAPTER VI.

LOCH BORA 49

CHAPTER VII.

ROSE AND VIOLET 53

CHAPTER VIII.

DINNER IN THE MANSE 62

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASQUERADE 70

CHAPTER X.

LONDON 85

PAGE.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MESS 97

CHAPTER XII.

CHANGES 103

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ALMA 110

CHAPTER XIV.

BALAKLAVA 119

CHAPTER XV.

SCUTARI 126

CHAPTER XVI.

DESOLATION 136

CHAPTER XVII.

A TRAGEDY 154

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME 168

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE 179

CHAPTER XX.

THE WEDDING 191

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION 200

GLENRORA;

OR,

The Castle, the Camp, and the Cottage.

CHAPTER I.

SIR RONALD MACDONALD.

THE fine old Highland estate of Glenrora, with its castle, its parks, its deer forests, its mountains, and its glens, had just changed hands. Sir Ronald Macdonald, the late proprietor, had died about a year ago, over head and ears in debt, leaving his noble estate deeply mortgaged, and his only son—a beggar.

Sir Ronald was the foolish son of a foolish father. He had scarcely attained his majority when he succeeded to the estate, even then in an embarrassed condition: but this gave Sir Ronald no uneasiness whatever, for, committing all his responsibility into the hands of a factor, he joined the "Guards," just at the commencement of the long peace, and plunged headlong into the sea of dissipation by which he was surrounded. Year by year added to his difficulties; his factor did all that man can do to meet the demands of his insatiable master—but all his efforts were in vain: the more he screwed and racked from the Glenrora tenants, the more Sir Ronald spent.

Wine, women, play—all the evil courses that the evil, unprincipled heart of man can devise, were entered upon and pursued with avidity. Gambling debts were incurred; and when money could not be had from the factor, the money-lenders were always at hand, and always ready to advance it, and to heap, of course, interest upon interest. His Highland estate was never visited, save for a month or two during the shooting season, and then the fine old castle was filled with a set of the "fastest" young men about town, who spent their days in the woods, and their nights in riotous debauchery, and who were the terror of all the respectable people in the neighbourhood.

But this state of matters could not last long. Sir Ronald had been sowing the wind—he must now reap the whirlwind. The old estate was at last mortgaged far beyond its value; the debtors became clamorous; the Jews, having got all that was possible, would give no more; and at the age of forty Sir Ronald was a ruined man. What was to be done? Sell his paternal acres, and go forth a vagabond and a wanderer on the face of the earth? Never! Another plan occurred to him. He was still comparatively young; that he was handsome there was no doubt; his whiskers and moustaches were unexceptionable, or rather irresistible, and his whole air or bearing wore the mark of the polished man of the world; while the somewhat *blasé* expression of his countenance served only to render him the more fascinating in the eyes of the ladies—at least so thought Sir Ronald—(pity he was so far right). So Sir Ronald made up his mind—he would marry! Yes, it would be a great sacrifice to him to give up all his "jolly good fellows," his pretty ballet dancers, his *rouge et noir*, and his glorious suppers, and all his dear old bachelor habits; but really, in the circumstances, it was the best thing he could do—better than being a beggar, at least! So, we have said, Sir Ronald made up his mind to sacrifice himself and his second nature on the altar of Hymen, in order to redeem his old acres. And no sooner said than done. He was not long in finding a daughter of one of

our merchant princes, who was quite ready to be bound upon the horns of the altar by an ambitious father, and whose little hand and bright solid gold were to be bartered for the aristocratic connection of the dissipated, ruined Sir Ronald! The marriage deeds were soon ready, the prudent father taking care, however, to secure his hard-won treasure, by settling his fortune entirely upon his pretty Mary and her children, leaving only the interest at the disposal of the newly-married pair. Sir Ronald would have demurred to this, but really there was no time to lose, and he dreaded lest his intended father-in-law should learn how very desperate his affairs were; besides, he was not without hopes that in a few years some change might be made in the marriage settlement. Sir Ronald, therefore, led his young bride, a blushing girl of nineteen, to the altar; started, after the ceremony, in a carriage and four for Dover, *en route* to the Continent, to spend their first year of married life, and then to return to settle down at Glenrora. So far all was well. On his return, his tenantry received them with every demonstration of joy. Triumphal arches crossed the roads; bonfires blazed on the hill-tops; flags and evergreens decked the windows of every house in the little village of Glenrora; and as the carriage, with Sir Ronald and his lady, approached the gate of the park, the poor creatures, in their enthusiasm, and anxiety to testify their affection, took out the horses and drew the carriage to the grand entrance. It was quite an ovation. One would have thought that the gallant officer had performed some great achievement—won a glorious victory—or accomplished a signal service in the cause of his country! And when he, with his young bride leaning on his arm, appeared on the low balcony before the drawing-room windows; and when he thanked them for the way in which they had received Lady Macdonald and himself; and when he regretted that his duties had kept him so much away from them; and when he said "that *now* he had come to live and die with them;" the warm hearts of the Highlanders could stand it no longer,

and they gave vent to their feelings in a succession of cheers which echoed along the mountains; they waved their blue bonnets, and some of the old men wiped a tear from their eyes, and declared "that he was the richt stuff after a', and everything wud be richt noo the laird wis hame himsel'." So far all was well. A few months after, Lady Macdonald presented her husband with a son and heir, and again the rejoicings were renewed; but though the months went past, the hopes of the warm-hearted tenantry were doomed to be disappointed; they saw little of Sir Ronald, and still less of their lady. At church it was observed by some of the sharp-eyed villagers that Lady Macdonald's cheek had lost its roses, and was becoming paler and paler every time she was visible; a nursery-maid had seen her weeping over her little boy; and strange rumours went abroad of domestic disagreements—of jealousies—and of heart-burnings. For a few years after their marriage the "London Season" had been spent in town, and London visitors had spent the shooting season with them; now all that was changed. Sir Ronald, it was said, was in low spirits—did not care for society—in short, had a hatred of the world; and his wife, poor thing, was now a confirmed invalid, and confined almost closely to her room. The parish minister, a worthy old Christian man, was almost her constant visitor, and warmly was he welcomed by the poor invalid. His words of consolation, drawn from the pages of Holy Writ, cheered her drooping spirits; pointed her crushed and broken heart to Jesus, the Lamb of God; and taught her to look with pleasure to a glorious immortality beyond death and the grave. So far all was well. The good man loved to speak of *her*; but of Sir Ronald he was silent. Gossips knew that worthy Mr. Graham could tell the secrets of that lordly castle, and tried—but tried in vain—to get them from him. The mystery increased. Sir Ronald was now never seen at church, or at market; he had given up visiting, riding, shooting; he was seldom seen by his servants even, and was waited upon by

an old faithful steward, who had been brought up in the house. Highland servants can keep secrets. Mr. M'Nab's answer to all enquiries concerning his master was very simple: "Ou, he's quite weel, but it's himsel' can't be bothered goin' oot."

The years passed on, and death, which had hovered long round Lady Macdonald, at last seized his prey. Her spirit returned to the hand of Him who gave it, and her fair fragile form, beautiful even in death, was to be consigned to that dust from which it sprung. A highland funeral is an important event. Sir Ronald was the head of his clan, and invitations were issued far and wide. The day appointed came; the attendance was great; friends of the family were present on both sides. Lady Macdonald's father, in deepest distress—blaming himself, when it was now too late, for having destroyed his daughter—had come down from London to assist in laying that idolized daughter in the tomb. Little Ronald, her only son, was moving to and fro among the guests, his fair, bright, young face dimmed with sorrow, his large blue eyes filled with tears: but his father—Sir Ronald—had not yet appeared. His steward excusing him by saying, "that he feared, from the state of his master's feelings, he would not be able to appear at all." But his father-in-law was not willing to take that excuse; and, at his repeated request, he had left the room to bring his master. After some delay he returned with Sir Ronald leaning heavily on his arm.

Every eye was fixed on the bereaved husband, who seemed beside himself with grief. He was dressed in the deepest mourning; his face was wan and haggard; his eyes blood-shot, and his lips of the reddest scarlet. On entering the apartment he gazed wildly round it for a few moments, when his eye falling on the coffin, which was about to be moved, he suddenly withdrew his arm from M'Nab's, and staggered toward it; then stretching out his arms, as if to embrace it, he fell heavily to the ground. M'Nab ran hastily to assist him; the minister, with saddened countenance, moved forward to do the

same; the spectators were horrified and paralyzed. Ah, there was no mystery now—the man was drunk! His father-in-law could scarcely control his indignation, and, with many a threat, ordered the fellow to be put out. This was done, though not without difficulty, for, with that strange perversity which characterizes drunkards, Sir Ronald seemed determined to remain.

After order had been restored, the coffin was lifted, and the solemn procession proceeded to the family burying place, where the young victim, with all her sorrows, was consigned to the tomb. This duty over, her father lost no time in returning to London, and on arriving there, his first act was to burn his will, which, of course, had been drawn out in Lady Macdonald's favour, and his next, to summon a lawyer to make another, bequeathing all his vast riches to some distant relative. And when the lawyer, who was a personal friend of his own, ventured to remind him that his daughter had left a son, he answered bitterly, "That the son was also Sir Ronald's, and that was enough for him."

Ah, there was no mystery now! The secret was out: Sir Ronald always drank. Even as a young man, he sometimes drank deeply, but with all his dissipation, he always managed to preserve appearances. A short time after his marriage, however, in the retirement of his highland home, the evil habit grew upon him. In his youth he drank for the sake of company, but now he drank for the love of drink. He began with wine, with liquors, with brandy; he ended with whisky—strong potent, fiery whisky. His faithful steward, while he could not refuse to procure the intoxicating draught, nevertheless managed to conceal the dreadful state to which his master was reduced; poor Lady Macdonald carried the secret with her to the grave; the parish minister was silent: all three strove to preserve appearances: but there was no need of that now. The dreadful fact was known over the length and breadth of the county, and gossips talked, and tongues wagged fast about poor Sir Ronald and his drunkenness; and things

soon came to a climax. M'Nab, seeing it was impossible either to restrain him from drinking, or to preserve in his breast any sense of decency and propriety, just allowed him to take his course, and Macdonald took it with a vengeance. While he could procure whisky to drink in the house, he drank it, and when this failed he betook himself to the "White Eagle"—the small inn of the village, and there, in the sanded parlour, he—the laird of Glenrora—sat from day to day taking a "gill" with this simple villager—or that small farmer, who would go home and say quite triumphantly, "That he had been takin' a gill wi' the laird to day." But even this honour came to be despised when it was found that, generally, the simple villager or the small farmer had to pay the bill, his honour, the laird, being always hard up for cash.

M'Nab made a point of going to the inn at night to take his wretched master home, and the tenants saw their proud laird, but too often now, reeling and staggering about the village, amid the shouts and jeers of a few idle boys, who generally followed him as he went. Again and again he was attacked by that dreadful disease, which seems to be the commencement of hell on earth, and again and again he recovered, only to rush on more greedily in the way of destruction. One evening M'Nab went, as usual, to the "White Eagle" to conduct Sir Ronald home, and found he was not there. His apprehensions were aroused when he ascertained, from the landlady, that his master had been there at noon; had called for a glass of whisky, had drank it off, and then, dashing the glass in the fire, had rushed from the house, "like ane clean demented," (to use her own words) and had gone she knew not whither, if not home.

"Home! I wish he had," said M'Nab, who saw, from the landlady's description, that the "evil spirit" was once more upon him. Sad and irresolute the steward stood at the door of the inn, cursing whisky in his heart, and grieving that he should ever have been the means of procuring any for his poor, miserable master,


600073874X

He had walked on for some time, turning sometimes to the right hand, and sometimes to the left; gazing now through some long vista, which, in the rays of the moonlight, seemed, to his excited imagination, to be peopled with shadowy phantoms; and now stopping to examine some dark object at his feet, which proved to be but the trunk of a tree.

Suddenly he started! A strange sound struck upon his ear. M'Nab, like all Highlanders, was superstitious. He listened—he scarce seemed to breathe—all was silent. He proceeded onwards, but had not gone many paces when a fiendish laugh rang loud and clear; and, ere he knew what he was about, he was seized by the powerful arms of a strong man, and held in them as in a vice.

"Ah! I have you now, you fiend!" shouted the unearthly voice." M'Nab shook, and the cold sweat stood on his brow. Altered though the voice was, he knew it to be his master's. "Ah! I have you; you are mine for ever; in the depths of the loch we'll lie down together. Yes, mine—mine for ever!" And as he shouted the words he dragged M'Nab swiftly along in the direction of the loch. The steward was a strong man, but in the grasp of the madman he felt himself feeble as a child, and still, still he was dragged on in the direction of the loch. And now there it was before them, gleaming, like silver, in the calm, cold moonlight. Suddenly Macdonald stopped, and said, "Ah, isn't it lovely, clear, and cold?—down, down in its depths there we shall lie! no fire for ever burning there. We'll cheat *him* for once: *he's* chased me all day long; but now—now I'm free!" and he burst into another laugh. Then loosening his grip and putting his mouth to M'Nab's ear, he hissed, "You remember the pantry, my good friend, and the sugared whisky? Ah, you fiend, you'll pay for it *now!*" and again M'Nab was seized in the powerful grasp. Once more he spoke. They were now on a rising ground overhanging the loch. Did he see the tears running down M'Nab's cheeks? In saddened tones he said, "Never mind, my good friend, I have forgiven *that*; it

will be all forgotten *there!*" and loosening his arms from M'Nab he flung them high above his head, and, with a defiant shriek, leaped into the loch! Down—down he went—a surge, a few ripples, kissed by the moon-beams, and all was still.

* * * *

And M'Nab lay all that night on the margin of the lonely loch; the heavy dews fell on him; the night winds rose and soughed around him; he felt them not. In bitterness of heart he communed with his spirit, and was still. Who can describe the agony, the self reproach, the remorse of that consience-stricken man during these awful moments? The night was spent in misery, but with the first streaks of grey morning peace came. The humbled, crushed, penitent man lifted his eyes to the Cross of Christ, and laying all his guilt on Jesus, received that *peace* which the world can neither give nor take away. Ere M'Nab left the margin of that fatal loch he vowed a vow unto the Lord, and prayed with many tears unto Him for grace to perform it—"That while life was granted him he would devote it to the care of his poor master's orphan son, and keep far from him the accursed thing which had been the bane of his father's life, and the cause of his father's destruction."

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW LAIRD AND HIS FAMILY.

And so Glenrora was sold, and Sir Ronald's debts paid, or nearly so, and the creditors, getting more than they expected, generously presented his son, then about eight years of age, with £500 to commence life with. This sum M'Nab, who had constituted himself the child's guardian, placed in the bank, with the determination not to touch one penny of it till it would be required to start his youthful charge in life; possibly to buy a commission for him, that being the profession which the faithful highlander thought most suitable to the "heir of Glenrora," for such his master's son would ever be in his eyes. And then M'Nab, lifting part of his own savings, removed to Edinburgh, and began business on his own account, as house-factor, taking young Ronald with him, to prosecute his studies under the best masters. Indeed, the education of the boy was his principal reason for removing to that city—and soon they were forgotten at Glenrora. For now great changes were making there. The old servants were all away; the old furniture was all sold, and masons, carpenters, and painters were all busy repairing and beautifying the castle for its new owner. Magnificent furniture was sent from London, and no money was spared upon its inner and outer decoration.

A great many rumours were rife concerning the new proprietor, but nothing definite about him was known; some said one thing and some said another, but on this all were agreed, that he was surpassingly rich. He had outbidden several neighbouring proprietors, who were anxious to annex Glenrora to their large estates, and now

he was sparing no expense in the improvement of the house and grounds, and, therefore, rich he must be; but how, where, or when, he had acquired those riches was food for conjecture, and would possibly be so for some time. The general opinion seemed to be, that many years ago the proprietor's father had gone to India, or some of those out-of-the-way places, where money was formerly coined, and had brought home rather more than his own share of it.

It was a bright day in August, when the new proprietor and his family arrived at Glenrora. The highlands were looking their best; the heather was in full bloom; the mountain ash was bending under its scarlet fruit; the cultivated patches were waving with golden corn; the woods were robed in foliage of every tint—green, brown, yellow, and red; the hills and mountains, bathed in sunshine, were flushed with richest purple, softened in the distance to a hazy blue, their summits veiled in coronets of glittering mist; the air was warm, yet bracing; and nature seemed to revel in the glory of its Creator. The following Sunday the family appeared in the parish church; and everybody was now in a fair way to have their curiosity gratified.

Mr. Macdougal—this was the name of the new laird—was a fine looking man, about thirty-five, tall, and well-made; but though his general appearance was prepossessing at first sight, it by no means pleased so much on nearer inspection. His features were good, but their expression was destroyed by a low brow, with heavy eye-brows, which met across the forehead, and by a heavy hanging under lip, and chin decidedly sensual in its form; his complexion was florid; his hair was reddish in colour, and his whiskers and moustachios a shade lighter; his teeth were large and white, and his manner, when he chose, frank and agreeable. Such was Macdougal in appearance and manner. Of his character we need not speak, as it will come out in the course of our story.

His wife was a sweet, pretty, little Englishwoman,

with the slight, yet gracefully rounded form which generally characterises her country women; and, though she had been married for ten years, she still was girlish in manner and appearance. The family consisted of four children; a boy, the eldest, named Albert; two little twin girls, named Rose and Violet; and another boy, a baby still in arms, who rejoiced in the name of Louis, pronounced always after the French manner.

While Albert drove home in the handsome low barouche with his parents, the little girls walked the short distance from the church to the castle with their governess, a young lady deeply dressed in mourning, and wearing a heavy veil of crape over her face. As they walked the children were in high spirits, as children will be on Sunday as well as Monday, and chatted gaily to their governess about everything, and everybody, and especially about the strange things of their new highland home. They did not notice that their governess scarcely spoke, and answered their questions simply with monosyllables. In truth, the poor girl was in deep affliction; she had recently lost her mother, the only parent she had ever known, and now, for the first time, she was cast abroad on the wide world with not a friend to whom she could unbosom her sorrows. She had joined Mr. Macdougal's family in London just the night before they left for Scotland, and had therefore been only a few days among them, and was still feeling keenly the isolated nature of her position. She was plunged in a profound reverie, from which, however, she was roused by little Rose exclaiming suddenly, "Miss Hobson, do you know why I like Sunday the best of all days?"

"No, my dear, I certainly do not," replied her governess; "though there are many reasons why good little girls should like it best."

"Oh! but I am not a good little girl. Aren't good little girls always praying, and singing, and saying hymns? And good little girls never cry, nor are naughty, nor tease their brothers. And then," the child con-
-ed, in a lower tone of voice, "don't good little girls
ys die, Miss Hobson?"

"Oh, not always, my dear. Many good girls grow up to be good, useful, and happy women. What makes you think so?"

"Because Miss Russel, our last governess, was always telling us stories about good girls," replied Rose, "and they always died; so I made up my mind that I would not be a good girl."

"Oh, Rose! that's shocking," said Miss Hobson. "You must pray to God to change your mind."

"Well, perhaps, when I get old; but I don't wish to die yet. Now, Miss Hobson, do guess why Violet and I like Sunday best?"

Miss Hobson made one or two ineffectual attempts at guessing, but they were far from right. So Rose said, "Oh! Miss Hobson, you'll never find out, so I must tell you. Well, then! Violet and I like Sunday best because we always have wine to dinner on that day."

"Wine to dinner!" exclaimed Miss Hobson; "well, I don't think I would ever have guessed that reason."

"Why not?" asked Violet. "Don't you think wine very good?"

"I don't know, Violet," replied her governess. "I don't think I ever tasted it."

"Never tasted wine!" exclaimed both the children, in one breath. "Oh, Miss Hobson!"

Miss Hobson could scarcely refrain smiling, as she said, "Well, my dear children, there is nothing so very dreadful in that; I don't suppose I should like wine, even were I to taste it."

"Not like it! I am sure you would," said Rose.

"Well, my dear, I hope I *never shall*," replied Miss Hobson, in tones so sad and serious, that the children did not continue the subject, though they could not help thinking it very strange and very funny that any person should wish not to taste, or to like wine.

"On Sunday Mr. and Mrs. Macdougal were in the habit of dining earlier than on other days, and of having their children round them; their governess also dined with her pupils. During dinner, Albert had a glass of

sherry; and a glass of full rich port, with the other children, along with the fruit at dessert. When the little girls had each their glass of wine poured out, Rose addressed her papa, and said, "May Miss Hobson not have some wine, papa?"

"Certainly, my dear, I was just going to pour it out for her: but why ask such a question, Rose?"

"Because, papa,"—the child hesitated, she glanced toward Miss Hobson, and saw that her face was suffused with crimson, and with the intuitive delicacy of a child did not wish to give pain.

"Because what—Rose?"

"Because—because Miss Hobson says she never tasted wine, and she hopes she never may like it!"

"Never tasted wine! Miss Hobson. Is that the case?"

"Yes, sir," replied the governess, in an agitated voice.

"Well," said Mr. Macdougal, passing a large glass full of rich racy port towards her, "You must never be able to say *that* again." "There, take that port; it is good, I assure you;" and a feeling of pity arose in his breast as he contemplated a young lady of eighteen, who had lived so long, and had been exposed to the dreadful privation of not tasting wine!

But the wine stood beside Miss Hobson untouched, and noticing Mr. Macdougal's eye fixed upon her, she said, "Pray, sir, do not think me rude, if I decline the wine."

"Rude, Miss Hobson, oh, no; but do oblige me by tasting it."

Miss Hobson put out her hand to lift the glass, when, suddenly, she drew it back; the colour rushed to her temples, the tears to her eyes, and, in a husky voice, she said, "I dare not—I dare not!" Then, bursting into tears, she rose abruptly, and left the room.

Mr. and Mrs. Macdougal looked at each other. This was a pretty scene, indeed: just one of those scenes which all well-bred people strive to avoid; and such a fuss about taking a glass of wine! such a trifle to make such an ado about!

"The girl's mad," said Mr. Macdougal.

"Oh, no; perhaps she's only a teetotaller," said his wife, with a quiet, silvery laugh.

"Teetotaller, or not; she can't stay here if she can't conduct herself in a becoming manner. You must give her notice to quit to-morrow."

"Would not that be rather premature?" said Mrs. Macdougal. "It is only three days since she came to us: you know how highly she was recommended; and really—"

"She's a humbug," interrupted her husband; "and go she must. Or, if you *will* keep her (seeing the vexed look on his wife's face), it must be on the condition that she dines in her own room on Sundays."

"Oh! I have no objection to *that*," replied his wife.

"And may we not dine with you on Sundays, mamma?" said Violet.

"Certainly you may, my dear," replied mamma.

"Papa, what are teetotallers?" asked Albert.

"Oh, they are a set of fools, my boy, who won't drink anything but water; and they think they'll turn the world upside down, and make everybody good by that means."

"Oh, papa, how funny! *I* would not like to be a teetotaller."

"No, my boy, I should hope not. You'd never be a gentleman if you were."

"Papa, may I have that glass of wine?" continued the boy, pointing to the one which had been filled for Miss Hobson.

"I suppose you may, my little fellow."

Mamma remonstrated. "He's had *two* already. Don't you think that quite enough?"

"Well, perhaps. Don't take more than half, dear." And then, in answer to his mamma's alarmed look, he continued, "It will do him no harm. Sunday comes only once a week."

And then Rose and Violet asked for a "little more also." The *little more* was given and finished, and then

mamma rose, and the children, and went into the drawing-room, leaving Mr. Macdougal to sit over his wine alone. And no sooner had they gone than he rose and rang the bell, and, on the servant entering, he was ordered to put down the brandy and bring hot water—Mr. Macdougal being determined to make himself comfortable. And mamma determined to make herself comfortable also, for, on entering the drawing-room she flung herself on a couch, took up the *Times;* but she did not read much, for in five minutes she was fast asleep. And the children—the girls retired to one of the bow windows, to amuse themselves with some prettily painted "Scripture cards," and Albert to a low couch, from which he displaced a beautiful, silky-haired, long-eared spaniel, to whom he made up his mind to show particular attention, and accordingly proceeded to pull poor Sancho's ears, and tease him after the latest boy-fashion, to all which endearments the poor animal submitted most patiently — indeed, too patiently for Albert, who would have preferred a "spar." So, releasing Sancho, he moved to the bow window beside his sisters, with the intention of having a spar with them. The dog, thus reaping the fruit of its submission, leaped once more on to the low couch, made two or three turns, for what purpose let those skilled in canine nature say, resumed his comfortable position, and was soon as fast asleep as his mistress.

But there was no sleep in the bow-window. When Albert approached his sisters he soon discovered that a misunderstanding had commenced: so, instead of doing what he could to restore peace, the naughty boy took the part of Violet against Rose, and quite a serious quarrel soon ensued. Rose had succeeded in making up several sets of the cards, and was anxious to procure one or two, which Violet had, to complete two more sets, when Albert interfered, and seizing the sets which Rose had already arranged, with a loud laugh threw them to a distance all about the room.

"You nasty, rude boy!" exclaimed Rose, bursting into tears.

"Who cares for your opinion, I should like to know, Miss?" said Albert, giving a fierce tug at one of his sister's golden curls.

And the quarrel increased, till from words—rude, naughty words—they came to blows, and at last Rose was driven with such force against the corner of a chiffonnière that she got her brow cut, and the child, when she saw the blood, gave such a scream that mamma awoke with a great start, and was more alarmed than she required to be, and rang the bell loudly and ordered the nurse to be sent for, and, notwithstanding this order, accompanied the child herself to the nursery, pressing her fine cambric handkerchief to the wounded brow, and then, having seen the head bandaged, she returned to the drawing-room, and ordered Albert to leave her presence, to which order Master Albert paid no attention whatever. At last Mr. Macdougal entered the room in a *very comfortable state indeed;* and Mrs. Macdougal poured out a long complaint about the children, to which he answered, in a tone by no means affectionate for a loving husband, "Pooh! pooh! children will be children. Will you order coffee?"

Coffee was ordered, and taken in almost perfect silence. Then prayers followed, or the form of them, Mr. Macdougal reading a short moral sermon, after the style of Blair, and rather a long prayer, in a thick husky voice; and any one, paying attention, would have observed that he made a good many mistakes; but as no one paid attention, it did not much signify. And then, the Sabbath duties being over, Albert and Violet kissed mamma and papa, and said, "Good night;" and when they left, mamma flung herself back on the couch and exclaimed, "Well! I am glad that Sunday is over, for having those children round me always upsets my nerves!" To which her husband replied, with something of a sneer, "Well, I don't think you give yourself a very great deal of trouble with them, my dear."

"Now, Mr. Macdougal, you may hold your tongue, for, save giving them wine, I don't know any one thing

you do for them. I well believe that it was all owing to the three glasses of wine at dinner that Albert behaved so ill to-night!"

"Three glasses of wine! Now you are absurd. Pray how many had you?"

"Not more, at any rate," said his wife. "I am not sure if I had so many."

"Besides beer and porter, eh!"

"Oh! but I am not a child," said Mrs. Macdougal, laughing; "I think I shall go to bed: I see it's no use talking to you."

"Not a bit, I assure you; but I have a theory about the training of children, and I intend to give it a fair trial."

"Is it a secret? or may I ask you to divulge it?"

"Oh! it's no secret: it is simply this, that children should have almost everything they wish: you know that the best way to keep them from being greedy about rich cake is to give them a surfeit of it: why not do the same with wine?"

"And make them tipsy, I suppose."

"Not exactly that," said Macdougal, colouring with anger, for he did not altogether like the natural sequence of his argument.

"Well, I don't precisely understand you," said his wife; "but you are a philosopher, and I am but a simple woman!"

"And a very nice one, too, I assure you," said her husband, putting his arm round her waist and kissing her.

Mrs. Macdougal looked quite pleased; her husband's breath was redolent of brandy, but she did not mind that; she was used to it. Being quite satisfied with having the best of the argument, Mrs. Macdougal, like a prudent woman, determined to say no more on the subject. And, after all, her husband might be right! So, lifting the little silver candlestick, she lighted the wax candle and retired.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOVERNESS.

Miss Hobson, on leaving the dining-room, rushed frantically through the hall and up stairs to her own room, the door of which she shut and bolted behind her; and then, flinging herself on her bed, she sobbed and wept bitterly. "What a fool I am!" she at last exclaimed; "Oh, my dear, dear mother, is this all I have profited by your counsels and your prayers? When shall I have the moral courage to do what I know to be right, heedless of the opinion of the world? *When?*"—and again the poor girl burst into tears. The evening was spent by her in self-reproach and self-condemnation. Again and again she went over in her mind the scene enacted at the dinner-table, hoping to find some excuse for what she felt must appear her ridiculous conduct—but in vain. "What will Mr. and Mrs. Macdougal think of me? And my little pupils too? Better far have given Mr. Macdougal my real reason; he might then have respected me; but now—*now!*"

And yet Margaret Hobson was not a fool. On the contrary, she was a woman gifted far more highly than many of her sex—gifted in mind and person; and this extreme sensitiveness or nervousness was but the penalty which the highly gifted too often pay for that brilliant genius which raises them above their fellows.

Look at her even now, reader, as she sits in her solitary room, clean and comfortable enough, but bare and totally devoid of any article of luxury with which other parts of the house abound—quite good enough, however, for a governess. Look at her, even now, as she sits, her head supported by her little white hand!

her rich black hair hanging in dishevelled masses around her white throat and graceful shoulders; her usually pale cheek suffused with crimson, and her great grey eyes, with their dark heavy fringes, filled with tears. Look at the graceful profile—the almost Grecian nose—the slightly parted lips—the rounded chin. Look at the tall finely moulded figure, rounded in every limb; at the elegant attitude; yes, all unconscious as she is, Margaret would form a study which a painter or a sculptor would select for a model.

And her mind, endowed richly by nature, had been cultivated and polished by education in no ordinary degree, under the best masters that London could produce. Familiar with the literature of her own country, she could read and study that of Germany, Italy, and France; her little fingers could, with light and rapid touch, run over the most difficult passages of Beethoven or Mozart; while she could sketch and paint with the eye of an artist, both in oil and in water colour. And yet, with such endowments and such accomplishments, Miss Hobson could not refuse a simple glass of wine without behaving like a child! What was the cause? A short retrospect of her history will, perhaps, give a clue to her strange behaviour.

About twenty years before this time, Dr. Hobson, a medical man of much promise, settled in a beautiful village in Hampshire, the centre of a rich and flourishing district. About six months afterwards, having ascertained that the profits of his profession would enable him to live respectably and comfortably, he took and furnished a handsome house, with garden and small greenhouse, picturesquely situated on the outskirts of the village, and wedded one to whom he had long and ardently been attached, the daughter of a clergyman of the English Church, under whose roof young Harry Hobson had spent some of his happiest years while preparing for the University.

Their dreams of happiness were now realised. Harry and his fair bride were the admiration of the surrounding

neighbourhood—he so noble, so good, and so clever—she so lovely, so gentle, so kind! What a prospect of happiness before them! Happy in each other, what a life of usefulness might they not lead—usefulness to man and glory to God! Years passed on; children were born to them—a girl and two boys; and still the sun of their happiness was in its zenith; but the storm came at last—how can we write it?—the storm which crushed their happiness to the dust, and carried away the remembrance of it as with a whirlwind.

In an evil hour, Dr. Hobson accepted an invitation to dinner with some gentlemen of the county with whom he was intimate—gentlemen in whose houses he and his wife had frequently dined. But this dinner was something different; it was in celebration of races which had just taken place—was held in the principal inn of the village. Of course there were no ladies present, and the gentlemen were left untrammelled in the enjoyment of all the good things of this life. The dinner was sumptuous —those dinners usually are,—but all the delicacies were fairly thrown into the shade by the quantity and quality of the wines—wines from France, wines from Spain, and wines from Germany! There was rich old port and sparkling champagne, there was hock and claret; but what need to recapitulate all the kinds, and all the varieties? Suffice it to say, that there was every inducement in colour, in flavour, and in zest, to tempt the guests to drink—and drink they did! and uproariously happy they all became, not excepting the worthy doctor; in fact, he was the jolliest of the lot; and for a very good reason. He had not drunk more than the others, indeed, not so much as some of them; but they were seasoned topers. The doctor, on the contrary, was a temperate man, and rarely or ever exceeded a glass or two at dinner, but on this occasion he had not counted his glasses; and song, and toast, and speech were following each other in rapid succession, when the waiter entered with a note for Dr. Hobson. His eye scanned it, and, apologising, he rose and left the room. A lady patient

had been taken suddenly and unexpectedly ill, and to lose no time her husband's carriage was waiting for the doctor at the door of the inn. As Dr. Hobson emerged into the open air he felt giddy, and was oppressed by a sensation quite new and strange to him; feeling assured however, that it would pass off, he entered the carriage and told the coachman "to drive rapidly." The order was obeyed, and in a short time their destination was reached. But not a moment too soon. The carriage had evidently been watched for, and the hall door was opened as Dr. Hobson descended the steps. At the door the husband was waiting; he pressed the doctor's hand, and, in almost inarticulate words, hoped "he was not too late." A servant led the way at once to the patient's room. Dr. Hobson entered. A glance showed him, as he approached the bed, that it was a very bad case; the patient had fainted, and lay pale as the snow-white linen by which she was surrounded. A nurse was using restoratives, chafing her cold hands, bathing her marble brow. She made way for the doctor, saying, as she did so, "Oh, doctor, I am glad to see you!" Dr. Hobson felt the patient's pulse: he held it in his hand—but what is this! The strange sensation steals over him again, but this time with increasing force. He struggles against it—in vain. The heat of the apartment, the anxiety, all tend to aggravate it. He drops the arm—he bends his head forward—he falls upon the bed—he is unconscious!

The nurse had retired to some distance while the doctor was with his patient. She begins to marvel at his long silence. She is alarmed—she approaches the bed. She finds her lady still unconscious, and the doctor fallen upon the bed, as insensible as she! The nurse utters a scream; she rings violently; master and servants enter. Their consternation may be better imagined than described. The doctor is removed—and, to the unspeakable horror and indignation of master and servants, is found to be—intoxicated! But there is no time to waste on him, —he is unceremoniously thrust out. The carriage and horses are once more despatched: but this time, ten miles

have to be traversed ere medical aid can be procured. The patient recovers from one fit, only to fall into another. The husband is in agony. Oh! how slowly the hours pass away! Morning dawns, but it brings no hope to breaking hearts. The carriage wheels are once more heard—the hall door is once more opened, but softly, oh! how softly. The physician's heart sinks; he knows but too well the meaning of that gently-opened door—the meaning of the awe-struck expression on the servant's face. He asks no question. He reads but too distinctly on every face—"*Too late, too late!*" The fair mistress of that gorgeous mansion is cut down in the midst of youth and beauty. The husband sits in solitude, and laments the wife of his youth and his unborn child.

A sad and heart-broken man is the once happy and talented Dr. Hobson. Retribution, in his case, swiftly followed. His practice left him, at least, such practice as paid; his friends, those with whom he dined and took wine (mark it, reader), were the first to leave him—they could not trust their lives, and the lives of their wives and children, in his hands. Certainly not. Of all men in the world, a medical man requires the coolest head and the clearest judgment. Life and death often hang on his hands; night and day he must be ready for every or any emergency; night and day he must be prompt, cautious, skilful, courteous, gentle, and patient. Of all men in the world, a medical man would require to be sober, temperate, a water drinker; and yet, of all men, few have greater temptations to indulge in the use of stimulants. Cold, wet, exposure, long and weary watching—nights spent in miserable hovels—all plead strongly just for one glass of wine—just a "tasting" of brandy. And yet, to the credit of the profession be it spoken, many of our greatest and best medical men have not only become abstainers themselves, but, knowing the effects of alcohol upon the system, have thrown themselves into the thick of the fight, and are among the foremost in endeavouring to promote the great cause of abstinence.

From that fatal night poor Hobson's career was downward. He had lost caste; he had lost his fair fame; he

had lost his good character. What remained to him? His wife endeavoured, though her own hopes were shattered, to cheer her husband, but her efforts were useless. He sunk into a state of apathy, and cared for nothing but that which had been his bane—intoxicating drink! His affairs got into disorder; the handsome house was left and a smaller one taken; another medical man came to the district and got all the practice; his wife and family were reduced to poverty; while his poor children, one after another, fell a prey to an epidemic which raged in the district, with the exception of one—the little girl. Thus far his wife had striven, by dint of good management, to keep a house for herself, her family, and her poor wretched husband. She had stinted herself of necessary food; she had mended, and patched, and turned, and done everything that the fingers of mortal woman could do, to prevent outlay—hoping, against hope, that better days would dawn, and that her poor husband would one day be restored to her, cured and in his right mind. She had used all her influence to bring about this much-to-be-desired end; she had wept, she had pleaded, she had implored, she had conjured him, for their children's sake, to endeavour to forsake the destructive habit which was ruining him now, and which would ruin him for ever. She had reminded him, oh! how tenderly, of their early love and the promise of their wedded bliss in vain. Stem the torrent as in its impetuous rage it bursts the barriers which have so long confined it, and sweeps across the fertile plain, carrying the fair fruits of man's industry away in its seething wrack of waters; arrest the avalanche in its fall, ere it bury in its ruins smiling villages and vine-clad valleys; stop the drunkard in his downward career—tell him of a broken-hearted wife, of starving babes—tell him of anything—it will be of no avail. Nothing but the arm that can stem the torrent, or arrest the avalanche—nothing but the special, we had almost said *miraculous*, interposition of Heaven can save him from the abyss to which he hurries.

Again and again did Dr. Hobson endeavour to amend —again and again did he lay his head on his wife's lap and weep like an infant, in very bitterness of spirit; and while she would tenderly smooth back the raven curly hair, even now silvered with grey, from his hot forehead, he would promise, with God's assistance, to commence a new life, to remove to another town, and to provide in a proper way for her and his little daughter; and the poor creature would believe him. One ray of sunshine even was sweet in the midst of her cloudy and stormy sky; and she would lay her head upon her pillow, thanking her Father for this one ray of hope. Yes, to-morrow she would watch him and tend him (he had promised not to leave the house)—she would nurse him, and in a few weeks he would be strong again; they would remove to another place, where his sad history was unknown; he would once more assert his position, and her own Harry—her Harry, so highly talented, so richly gifted, would once more be appreciated—would once more fill the place which God, in His providence, had decreed for him. Poor dreamer! how soon must thy air-built castles vanish! The morrow comes—the morrow when the "new life" is to be commenced. Harry leaves thy side—he disappears—the hours pass on—steps are heard at thy threshold—strange steps; thy heart beats quick—a man enters—he says, in a low voice, "Pray don't be alarmed madam—Dr. Hobson has met an accident, but I——" He is interrupted by the entrance of the strangers bearing the body. They hesitate—they look sadly towards thee —yes! thy worst fears are confirmed—thy Harry—thy own—thy madly-loved Harry—is a corpse!

Why prolong a sad story? For many weeks Mrs. Hobson was delirious; kind neighbours nursed her, and tended little Margaret. And their care was rewarded. The poor woman slowly recovered, but her spirit was crushed and broken, and she would have longed to have slept in the grave with her poor Harry, had it not been for her little Margaret. Her child—*his* child—was now her only tie to the world—to educate and fit her for

providing a livelihood for herself when she, her mother, should be no more, her sole object in life. With this view she removed to the neighbourhood of London, and, being a highly accomplished woman, began giving lessons to a few young ladies belonging to families to whom she had carried letters of introduction. By this means she was enabled to live with her little daughter in comparative ease, and to educate her child in the way she desired. But the sands of her life were nearly run—she never recovered the shock caused by the sudden death of her husband; and when Margaret attained her eighteenth year she felt unmistakable symptoms of her end approaching—"the bowl was broken at the fountain, and the silver cord was loosed." She had long been prepared for this. The lady with whom Margaret had finished her education had solemnly promised to give a home to her orphan daughter till her acquirements should procure one for herself. For the rest, Mrs. Hobson had committed her child to that God who is the Father of the fatherless, and the orphan's shield, and in His hand she knew she would be safe for time and for eternity. On the day before her death she summoned her child to her bedside, and gave her many counsels for her guidance through the slippery paths of life; then, fixing her eyes upon her, she said, in solemn tones, "Margaret, ere my eyes are closed in death, you must promise me—your dying mother—one thing; you must promise it as in the sight of God, and then I shall die in peace—and that is, that, in whatever circumstances you may be placed, you will never taste wine, or anything stronger than water."

Mrs. Hobson had raised herself on her pillow—her pale cheek was flushed—her eyes shone—her voice was agitated. Margaret could not understand it, but she readily gave the promise her mother asked. It was no privation to her, she had never used aught but water. Her mother sank back on her pillow, saying, "God bless you, my child, I know you will keep your word. I can't say more at present, but after I am gone you will find a small packet in my writing desk sealed and addressed

to yourself: open and read it. You will learn from it much to warn and instruct; you will also find much to pity. Farewell, dearest, farewell." The exertion was too great, and she fainted. Margaret hung over her mother, kissed her pale cheek and cold hands; her tears fell fast on her mother's face, and the poor girl sobbed as if her heart would break. Once more, indeed, Mrs. Hobson rallied, but these were the last words she uttered. The following evening Margaret Hobson was an orphan!

A few weeks after her mother's funeral, before consigning their little stock of furniture to the hand of the auctioneer, she selected one or two articles which had specially belonged to her mother, to be kept sacred for her sake. The writing desk was one; she opened it, and in a small drawer found the packet her mother spoke of:—it was a short outline of her father's history.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW MINISTER.

About two years after Mr. Macdougal had bought Glenrora, Mr. Graham, the worthy minister, died, and was succeeded by his nephew, Edward Graham, a young man of a very different calibre from his uncle. The old minister, though everything that could be desired in his life and conduct, was retiring, and contented himself with performing his duties to the best of his power, without seeking to make any aggression on the world without; and, while sighing over the general indifference to vital religion, which too generally prevailed, nevertheless regarded it as a sort of necessary evil. Not so with his nephew; he belonged to a different school. No evil was necessary with him which could be exterminated; no vice which could be eradicated; no sin which could be subdued. For some years before his appointment to Glenrora, he had been employed as a sort of home missionary in one of our large towns. He had there come to close quarters with wickedness. He had lived, moved, and breathed in a very atmosphere of vice; he had seen iniquity carried on with a high hand, and he knew what an exceedingly vile and hateful thing sin is; vile and hateful in the quiet, rural village and parish of Glenrora, as well as in the lanes, the closes, and the courts of a great city. Girding on his armour, and throwing himself into the thick of the fight, he was determined to conquer or die at the post—the post where God had placed him, whether in the quiet parish or crowded city, the village church or the heathen shore. Edward Graham, then, was no sleeping watchman, no dumb dog. He came to Glenrora; he found all outwardly beautiful to the eye, as

beautiful to the eye of the mind as were the mountains, the loch and the woods by which it was surrounded, but he found that the beauty was that of death; and that, under an outward religious profession, there was much moral decay, and much moral corruption. He found proprietors living in luxury, in immorality, and indifference; he found farmers engrossed with business, with pleasure, with covetousness; he found ploughmen herding together in bothies, more like the brutes they fed than rational immortal beings; he found villagers passing the day in coarse, ill-natured gossip, rejoicing in nothing more than the destruction of a neighbour's good fame; he found, in his small parish, several public-houses regularly licensed, and several private houses where whisky could be had for a consideration, *though it was not sold;* and, moreover, he found that this whisky was at the bottom of all mischief, and not only at the bottom, but at the beginning and end of it. He found, in short, much that was evil, little that was good, much to regret, to lament, to grieve over, little to gladden, to cheer, or to encourage. But Edward Graham was not the man to sit down with folded hands and bewail the depravity of the world at large, and of his own parish in particular. Naturally of an enthusiastic temperament, whatever he did he did with his whole soul; he could not understand half measures. Soon, therefore, a complete and powerful machinery was set in force to meet the existing evils. Bible classes were opened, prayer meetings instituted, and a course of regular household visitation entered upon, while God's Word was fully and faithfully preached from Sabbath to Sabbath with all the ardour of a zealous and affectionate spirit, with all the earnestness of a man speaking from the heart. The means he used—the result he left with God. He was now sowing beside all waters, hoping, in due time, to reap, if he fainted not!

In the Castle, things were proceeding in their natural and ordinary course. Rose and Violet were still under the care of Miss Hobson, whom Mrs. Macdougal found

too valuable to part with readily, and who, notwithstanding the "scene" at the dinner-table, had succeeded in making herself not only respected, but esteemed—that is to say, so far as Mr. and Mrs. Macdougal could esteem anybody or anything but themselves. Rose liked her—Violet loved her. On Violet she was producing a decidedly good effect; on Rose her influence was doubtful. Though these two sisters were as much alike as possible in face and figure, they were as unlike as possible in character, disposition, and temper. Rose was haughty, impetuous, impulsive, passionate. Violet was gentle, steady, obedient; retentive rather than clever. Rose was capable of making a great figure in the world; she was born to rule—to be the sun of her system—the admired of all. Violet, like the gentle flower whose name she bore, loved the shade. If she ruled, it would be through love; she was born to admire, rather than to be admired. As the sisters grew older, these characteristics became more marked. Every one admired Rose—even Miss Hobson could scarcely help doing so, she was so brilliant, and everything she undertook she accomplished with the greatest ease. But, while she admired, her governess trembled for her. She was so fickle, so volatile—almost so unprincipled. Had her mother been different—had she seconded, even in the smallest degree, the efforts of Miss Hobson, all might have been well; but Mrs. Macdougal was proud of her brilliant daughter, and her father idolized her. With both parents Rose's word was law. Did her governess try to restrain her impetuosity, or to punish her disobedience, all at once it was open rebellion. Her mother was appealed to—and her mother never failed to support her rebellious child. Miss Hobson was powerless. Some governesses would not have submitted to this—right or wrong, Miss Hobson did. She was an orphan—she was homeless. She was comparatively happy at Glenrora; she loved Violet, and was loved by her. It was pleasant to have some one to love; she would like to watch over her pet—she might even yet be of use to her. She loved the glorious scenery by which she was

surrounded—the mountains in their grandeur heralding the rising sun with rosy streaks, or marking his departure by a gorgeous glow of amber, gold, and purple. She loved her little room, bare and unadorned though it was. It looked nicer, however, than when our reader last saw it; a few nice books and a pretty bouquet of flowers were always on the table—so Miss Hobson stayed.

One morning Mr. Graham, the new minister, called. It was about luncheon time, and he was asked to partake. He did so. The children, with their governess, always dined at that time. Miss Hobson's peculiarity in not taking wine was passed over, in consideration of her other estimable qualities; and though the children got a little every day now, instead of Sundays, it grieved their governess to find that their liking for it was by no means decreased by its daily use. She ventured to hint to their mamma that she was anxious on the subject. Their mamma smiled and said: "Oh! Miss Hobson, I am aware you hold somewhat extreme views on that point, I won't soon forget the exhibition you made of them the first Sunday you dined with us." Miss Hobson coloured, but their mamma continued: "The girls are both growing fast, and I really believe a little wine to be good for them. Pray what do you fear?"

Their governess hesitated; she had not the moral courage to say what she feared.

Mrs. Macdougal understood her hesitation, however, and said, "You fear that they will become drunkards, I suppose?"

Miss Hobson bowed. "There is a possibility, madam."

"Now, I do wonder," said Mrs. Macdougal, "that a girl so sensible in every other thing, should be so absurd in this. I would almost be angry with you, did I not know that you are thoroughly convinced that you are right, and that you really are anxious about your pupils; but now look at me," continued the lady smiling, "I have taken wine ever since I remember, and stronger things besides; and you would not say that I was a drunkard, would you?"

"Oh! certainly not, ma'am," replied the governess.

If Miss Hobson had listened to gossip, she would have learned that Mrs. Macdougal was little else; but she did not listen to gossip, and, therefore, was not aware of the sad fact.

At luncheon, the servant filled a glass of wine for Mr. Graham. Miss Hobson watched him. Would a man so devout, so zealous, so energetic in every good work, be of her opinion in regard to wine? She was almost breathless as she saw him lift the glass to his lips and drain it to the bottom! A secret misgiving passed through her mind. "Could she possibly be wrong after all?" She was but a woman, a poor weak woman. Miss Hobson was humble, and Mr. Graham was one of the most superior men she had ever met. She was afraid that she must be wrong, but her duty was clear; her promise to her dying mother was sufficient for her; nevertheless she felt sad and dispirited. It is dispiriting to have one's views of a strong principle shaken.

But others had been watching, it seemed, besides her; for, on seeing Mr. Graham take his wine, Mr. Macdougal said, addressing him, "I am glad to see that you take wine. I almost feared, you will pardon me, sir, that you might belong to that class of unsocial beings who think it wrong to do so."

Mr. Graham smiled. "This is not the first time I have been suspected of being an abstainer; and were I convinced that my being so would be of the smallest use, I should become one to-morrow; but I believe that I may do more good by simply taking a little, than I would do by abstaining altogether. I feel I have more moral power in saying, 'I take one glass of wine, or a little toddy, and then I stop,' than if I were to say 'I never touch it, and would not do so on any consideration.' Moreover, wine is one of God's creatures, and, as such, is intended for our use."

"You are perfectly right, sir, perfectly right," said Mr. Macdougal, who was delighted to get so good an excuse for the indulgence of his favourite passion. "I

wish you could convince my young friend here," turning to Miss Hobson, "she holds very extreme views on that question; though I must do her the justice to say that she does not obtrude her opinions on others."

Miss Hobson coloured; and Mr. Graham said, smiling, and fixing his fine earnest eyes full on her face, "Well, perhaps, when I have the pleasure of being better acquainted with Miss Hobson, I may use my eloquence to convince her of her mistake."

The expression of Miss Hobson's face convinced the clergyman that she was annoyed at being brought so prominently forward, and, not wishing to give pain, he adroitly changed the subject.

That afternoon, Rose, who was employed on a water-colour landscape, suddenly lifted her head, and said, "Miss Hobson, I have been thinking what a pity it is that such a handsome man as Mr. Graham should be a minister!" Her governess started. By a strange coincidence, she had been thinking, that very moment, of the young minister; but she was thinking less of his personal appearance than of his opinions. She had been going over and over in her own mind his reason for taking just a little wine—just a little toddy; and she could not help feeling that there was just a *little* sophistry in his argument.

"Don't you think so, Miss Hobson?" asked Rose.

"Think what, dear?" said her governess.

"Think that Mr. Graham is too handsome for a minister?"

"What an absurd idea! Surely he's none the worse for being handsome?"

"Oh! not for being handsome—if he only had not been such a stupid thing as a minister. Had he been an officer, I should have fallen in love with him!"

"Now, Rose," said her governess, "you are positively foolish, and I must insist on you attending to your work."

"Well then I will, if you'll permit me to make a sketch of Mr. Graham first;" and, without waiting permission, she dashed off a very clever little sketch, and,

on the whole, really a good likeness—then, passing it to her governess, she said, "Now, tell me if that is not like." Miss Hobson was astonished, and said, "Yes, it is like; you are an artist, Rose. How have you managed so well?"

"Oh! you know I hate listening to stupid sermons, so I have kept looking and looking at Mr. Graham for ever so many Sundays; and I know all his features—large, deep, full eyes—I am not sure whether they are blue or hazel; a straight, long nose; a beautifully formed mouth; a short upper lip, and such white teeth! But the teeth are not here, because, you see, the mouth's shut; and then, look! is not that exactly like his beautiful, curling hair?"

Miss Hobson did not know what to say. As a likeness, the little sketch was worthy of all praise; but she did not at all like the confession Rose had made as to the time she had selected for the study of her subject, so she contented herself with saying:—"Oh, Rose, were you only half as good as you are clever, how very happy you would make me."

"Then, Miss Hobson, you'll be very happy by-and-by, for I intend to be good some time."

Miss Hobson shook her head.

"Well, you may believe me or not," said Rose, "but I tell you, I intend to be so."

"Rose, don't forget what place is paved with good intentions."

"Oh! Miss Hobson, that's what *you* would call a poetical license."

The governess sighed; it seemed almost useless talking to Rose; and yet how anxious she felt about her.

Some days after this Miss Hobson and her pupils were walking through the village, and as they were returning home they met Mr. Graham. There was a shade on his fine face, and an expression of sorrow in his eye, which passed away, however, as he shook hands with Miss Hobson and her pupils, and, turning, accompanied them to the gate.

After the usual salutations, he said, "I have just been

engaged on a very sad errand, Miss Hobson; breaking the intelligence of her husband's death to a poor woman, who lives about a mile from this."

"Indeed! may I ask how it happened?"

"In a very sad way, I assure you. Her husband, who was a ploughman, left last night with some carts to go a considerable distance for coals. About ten o'clock he stopped at a toll, before entering Greenshaws, to take a gill to keep out the night air, and in the house he found two or three old acquaintances. After making sure that his horses were standing quietly, he sat down to have another gill with them. How long he sat is not positively known; but he was startled at last by the noise of a chaise coming along at full speed. The noise frightened his horses, and they set off at a great rate. He rushed furiously to stop them, and, seizing the first horse by the bridle, endeavoured to check it; but the rate at which they were going, made this impossible. Still holding by the reins, he was dragged from the ground, and thrown right in among the animals' feet, and ere he could regain his footing, the wheels of the carts passed over his head. Sadly bruised, and unconscious, he was removed to the toll-house, where he expired this morning. I received a letter a few hours ago, requesting me to break the intelligence to his wife, and prepare her for her husband's body being brought home. I have just done so, and seldom has it been my lot to perform so painful a duty."

"And how did she bear it?" asked Miss Hobson. "Not well. The poor woman fainted, and has since passed from one faint into another; I left her, in the care of some kind neighbours, and went to procure medical advice."

"Poor, poor woman!" sighed Miss Hobson. "Has she any children?"

"Yes, that is the worst of it; she has six, and they are all very young."

"How very, very sad!"

"Yes, it is sad," said Mr. Graham; "I trust God will

give her sustaining grace. The strange thing is," he continued, "that her husband was not addicted to drink; on the contrary, he was always considered a steady man, and a good workman."

"Strange," said Miss Hobson, "then it was just *that one gill!*" A flush suffused her cheek—a light flashed in her eye—it was just possible that she was right after all.

"Yes, Miss Hobson, it was just the one gill: I am almost inclined to adopt your code, and become an out-and-out abstainer."

Miss Hobson thought it would be well if he did, though she did not say so. They had now reached the entrance to the grounds, and Mr. Graham, wishing them "good morning," left them.

CHAPTER V.

A MORNING WALK.

SPRING had just come in! Spring! with its singing birds, and its fair fresh flowers! Spring! with its green sward—its pimroses—its cowslips—its bursting foliage—its rushing brooks—its universal life. Who does not love spring? Of all the seasons, Miss Hobson liked it best. So with spring she took advantage of the long mornings to walk far into the surrounding country. And how she did enjoy these long walks in the fresh bracing air of the morning! How she loved to mark the change which a single day at this season produced on the face of nature—to mark the mountain slopes becoming green; the early furze becoming golden; the humble gowan opening its gentle eye; and the leaves bursting on the still grey and bare trees! How she loved to see the ploughman at his early toil turning the rich fresh soil, or sowing the corn which was to provide for man—to listen to the cawing of the rooks, the chirping of the birds, as they gathered material for their nests; or the hum of a bee, as it set out betimes in search of its nectar! "The earth was full of God's goodness, and the little hills rejoiced on every side."

One morning, as she was returning home from a long excursion, her step light and elastic, and her usually pale cheek glowing with air and exercise, she saw Mr. Graham coming from the opposite direction. The path was narrow, and she could not possibly avoid him—why should she wish to do so? She could not tell, and yet she did wish, for her first impulse was to turn and fly. But that was out of the question: so, with beating heart she went forward, intending simply to say, "Good morning," and walk on.

Miss Hobson had not spoken to Mr. Graham for three or four months, and had never seen him, save in church; and then, as she did not at all approve of Miss Rose's manner of behaviour, she scarcely ever looked at him—though once or twice her eyes had met his in rather an awkward manner. Moreover, the manse had been undergoing repairs, and report said "that Mr. Graham was on the eve of his marriage." Report was not quite sure of the lady whom he was to marry, but it was *almost* certain that it was one to whom he had been long engaged, the daughter of a rich merchant—an elder, who had taken great interest in him when he was a missionary, etc. All this gossip, of course, was nothing to our governess. It could never signify the least to her who, or when, Mr. Graham should marry. To be sure, she did like him very much—as a minister, and she did hope he would get a good wife: but that was all!

In the meantime, Mr. Graham came up, and accosted Miss Hobson, his whole face expressive of the utmost pleasure at meeting her.

"What a charming morning, Miss Hobson! I was not aware you were such an early riser."

"Oh, yes, I am an early riser—I have been so always."

Miss Hobson was moving forward, in accordance with her resolution, as she spoke. But whatever her resolution was, Mr. Graham had no intention of parting so soon. He therefore turned, and walked homewards with her. After some time spent in conversation on ordinary topics, there was a pause, which was broken by Mr. Graham saying, "Miss Hobson!"

There was something in the tone of his voice that thrilled through Miss Hobson's heart, and caused her to look up. Mr. Graham was looking down to her, and she met those large earnest eyes, which Rose had so correctly described, bent on her face. Casting hers on the ground, she listened, while Mr. Graham, in a low tone of voice, said—

"Miss Hobson, I have long desired an opportunity of speaking to you on a subject very near my heart. This appears to me a fit time; may I speak now?"

Our governess trembled. What *could* Mr. Graham wish to say to her? In an agitated voice she replied, "Certainly."

Mr. Graham thanked her for the permission, and went on,—"From the first day I saw you, Miss Hobson, I loved you. Nay, start not! I know the foolish report that is abroad about my marriage; allow me to assure you now that there is not a word of foundation in it; unless—unless," he added, with a smile, "you give me permission to get the bride of my own choosing, and then I care not how soon the report is confirmed. Yes, dearest Miss Hobson, from the first day I admired—nay, loved your sweet face; and I felt that the mind must be fitted for so fair a casket, and that you were the only one I could ever love. Say, will you permit me to love you?"

He scarcely waited for an answer, but with increased ardour continued—"May I hope that the time will come when I may expect to be loved in return—to have a place in your gentle heart—an interest in your affections? Or, have I deceived myself—has that priceless treasure been given to another? Am I destined to toil through life's pilgrimage alone?"

Again he paused. There was something so inexpressibly sad in the tone in which he uttered the last few words, that Miss Hobson could not refrain from saying,

"Oh, no! Mr. Graham, you can never be destined for anything so sad, so solitary as that. Many there are who would be proud to love you; and till then, perhaps, a mother, a sister, may—"

"Mother—sister! I have neither. For the love of others I care not—for no love save thine! Oh! trifle not with me, I conjure you, dearest Miss Hobson! My happiness, my life, depends upon your answer. For months," he continued, his voice once more assuming a sad tone, "for months your image has been before me; it has been my thought by day, my dream by night; it has cheered my solitary board—it has brightened my solitary hearth—it has sat beside me in my study—it has encouraged me to fresh effort—it has soothed me when weary, strength-

ened me when ready to faint—it has (shall I confess it?) been present with me when on my knees. But this state of things must continue no longer. Dear Miss Hobson, I know you are incapable of flirtation—I know you will not give me unnecessary pain. If your heart is already another's, in kindness, in mercy, tell me so; and I will for ever leave this spot. I will bury myself in some dark region of the earth, where I may prosecute God's work in self-denial, in mortification, and in sadness, till that image is effaced from my memory, and I can serve my God with singleness of heart and purpose, with a soul weaned from every earthly joy—every earthly tie. Yes, perhaps, such discipline is what I require; perhaps it is intended for me. My destiny seems to hang upon your answer, Miss Hobson."

The poor girl's head was bent forward on her breast; her eyes, full of tears, were downcast; her hands were tightly clasped together, and her whole appearance betrayed a state of intense agitation. But who shall attempt to describe the storm of conflicting emotions created in her heart by the impassioned appeal of the young minister? That he was not indifferent to her, she knew well; had she met him more frequently, this feeling might have ripened into love ere now; but, as it was, she felt surprised beyond measure that she ever could have excited such love as Mr. Graham declared he entertained for her—it seemed to her impossible. Miss Hobson was essentially a humble girl; indeed, unlike many of our young ladies, her tendency was rather to underrate herself and her qualifications, than otherwise; and the declaration she had just heard seemed to her more like a page of romance than reality. And as romance she would have treated it; but there, close by her side, was one—one whom she respected more than any man she had ever met—hanging upon her lips for an answer; assuring her that his destiny was in her hands, and his happiness in her keeping. After a silence of a few minutes, Margaret Hobson slowly raised her head; turned her face full towards Mr. Graham; and said, "You are right, Mr. Graham, I am

incapable of flirtation. I was far from expecting to hear what you've now said, and as yet can scarcely realize it in all its meaning; but as it is I have never loved another."

"Thanks, thanks, dearest Miss Hobson, for that assurance. Then I may hope?"

Miss Hobson was silent. At last she said, "Pray do not urge me further now."

"One little word, dearest Miss Hobson—just one—'tis all I ask: may I hope?"

Again he bent towards her. She did not lift her head this time; but on his ear there fell a whisper—soft as zephyr's sigh, "Yes!"

And Edward Graham sighed in very gladness of heart; and Margaret blushed the rosiest of blushes; and they walked on in silence, each heart brimful of happiness; and the little birds trilled, and warbled, and sang, as they passed, and the wind seemed softer, the sun brighter, the grass greener, and the flowers fairer to these two, on that spring morning, than ever they seemed before!

Miss Hobson's morning walks were, from this time, no longer solitary. Was it strange, reader, that in whatever direction she set out she was sure to meet Edward Graham? And was it strange, think you, that in these morning walks the converse should be of their mutual love, and of their mutual plans for the future. In their case, the course of true love ran smooth. Indeed it generally does, whatever poets and novelists may say to the contrary; of course they would not agree to this latter statement; for, if they did, they would have considerable difficulty in spinning out their three volume novels. Nevertheless, we will maintain, that wherever love is placed on a worthy object, on one moving in the same rank in life, and on one endowed with something of the same mental gifts, in all probability that love will flow smoothly enough, till it falls into the sea of wedded bliss. Of course where a Duke, or a Prince Royal falls in love with a pretty peasant; a romantic young lady with a penniless fop; or an Earl's daughter becomes

enamoured of her father's footman, it is not to be expected, nor desired, that the course of such true love ever should run smooth. The love of Mr. Graham and Miss Hobson, however, was founded, not on admiration alone, though each, we doubt not, thought the other the handsomest person in the world, but on mutual esteem, and mutual respect for the mental qualities which they discovered in each other, and was a love, therefore, which had a chance of enduring through life, after passion had subsided, after their bright eyes had lost their lustre, and their raven hair its blackness.

And as our lovers became more confidential, as the heavings of their newly realized bliss subsided, and they could talk composedly of the past and the future, Miss Hobson found courage to refer to their first meeting at the Castle; to mention her feelings of surprise when she found the views Mr. Graham entertained with regard to drinking wine and other alcoholic drinks; and the uneasiness his arguments and example had caused in her mind, as to the soundness of her own principles.

"My dearest Margaret," (he was calling her Margaret now), Mr. Graham replied, "At that time, I little thought anything I could do would cause you pain. I have seen reason, however, very materially to change my views since the day of which you speak: it is not necessary that I should relate all the causes which have led me, step by step, to become an abstainer; it is enough to say, that I am one now, in the strictest sense of the word."

"Oh! thank God for that," exclaimed Miss Hobson, clasping her hands together; "dearest Edward, you have made me most truly happy."

"Had I thought it possible to add to your happiness, dearest, by the decision I made, it would no doubt have proved another inducement; but without that inducement even, I could not conscientiously go on with my eyes open, advocating the use, even in the smallest quantities, of intoxicating liquors. I dare say you remember the sad case of the poor man who was killed just in consequence of the one gill?" Miss Hobson assented,

and Mr. Graham continued: "That, unfortunately, was not a singular one; many others, though perhaps not quite so striking, have come under my own eye in the course of my daily work; cases of death caused by habitual drinking,—cases of wives dying from the ill-usage of their husbands, while in a state of intoxication—cases of want, and penury, and starvation;—cases of sons bringing down their parents' grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; those parents, meanwhile, cursing the day when they first gave their boys just a little weak toddy, or a little home-made wine.

"These are cases which are constantly occurring in every corner of fair Scotland; and I cannot now conceive, how, in face of the scenes I daily and hourly witnessed when engaged in mission work, I could so long have been sophist enough to deceive myself, and, I fear, possibly others, by maintaining that ministers and influential men might do more good by being simply temperate than by being abstainers!"

Miss Hobson listened to this statement with glowing cheek and beaming eye. Oh, how very happy she was: never before had she felt so truly, so serenely happy. Just in proportion as she loved Edward Graham did she tremble for the possibility of the future. Her father's sad story was ever present to her; her mother's blighted happiness ever in her mind; indeed she had sometimes been doubtful how far she was fulfilling that mother's dying request by wedding one who would indulge in even one glass of wine. But now, *now* there was no obstacle to their union, no cloud to cast a shadow o'er the future, not one drop of bitterness in her large cup of earthly bliss. Margaret feared that she was too happy, and on returning to her little room the first thing that she did was to fling herself upon her knees and breathe a prayer of thanksgiving for God's great goodness, and of supplication for grace to keep her from setting her heart too firmly on the passing things of earth.

"'Am thinking," said Mrs. Stewart, who kept one of the castle gates, to another gossip, "that the minister 'll

no' be for ha'in' the braw leddy frae the big toon aifter a'; he'll be contentin' himsel', ye'll see, wi ane nearer hame."

"Ay, an' what gars ye think that, Mistress Stewart?"

"What gars me think it? What, I wud like to ken, but my ain e'en, an' I winner gin a body needs ony thing better than them!"

"Ay, an what hae ye seen, woman? Canna ye say awa." And Mrs. Crony drew nearer, while Mrs. Stewart in a low and confidential tone, informed her, that for ever so many mornings she had seen Mr. Graham and Miss Hobson returning from their walks together; and the gossip continued, with a knowing wink, "An' they were lookin' ra'al canty-like; an' ra'al ta'en wi ane anither; an' 'am no blate, what eer fouks may think me, an' tak my word for't, that there'll be a wife up by in oor manse; and it'll no be the braw toon's leddy nether!"

And Mrs. Crony stuffed her big bare feet a little farther into her husband's old heelless shoes, and set out to publish the important fact.

CHAPTER VI.

LOCH RORA.

It was Moonlight! and, like a Queen enthroned, the glorious orb, with her attendant stars, was seated in the dark azure of a cloudless sky, and flinging her silver light over hill and dale, over castle and cottage, over teeming city and silent moor, over ocean's billows and inland lake. It was just such a night as the one on which the tragic occurrence, narrated in our first chapter, took place; and, though ten years had elapsed since then, there was no perceptible change on the banks of Loch Rora. Lofty mountains towered to the sky, and were reflected, in inky blackness, in its silent depths. Moonbeams coquetted with, and kissed, its sleeping waters, and great black firs, their trunks and branches, silvered by the same sweet light, adorned its rocky banks, just as they did ten years ago. On the very spot where poor Sir Ronald stood with the faithful M'Nab, locked in his deadly grip ten years ago, two men were now standing gazing silently and earnestly on the waters of the sleeping lake. The moonbeams fell full upon them, and brought out their figures in strong relief. The taller and younger of the two was a handsome young man of about twenty, of noble carriage and bearing, and his countenance, at the moment, was betraying intense emotion. The other was a man advanced in life, closely verging on three-score years and ten; but who, with the exception of his grey locks, bore few marks of age about him, and seemed still hale and vigorous. He had evidently been speaking, and he now stood with his hat in his hand, as if he had been narrating some exciting event.

At last the younger broke silence by asking, "Did he never rise to the surface?"

"Never, never, my boy; if he had, I would have plunged into the depths and borne him to land."

"Did you watch long?"

"All that night," said M'Nab, for he it was; "and God only knows if ever mortal spent such another!"

"I wonder it never occurred to you to have the loch dredged," said the younger man, who was no other than Ronald, the last representative of the proud lairds of Glenrora, whose eyes, wherever they turned, fell on hill, dale, rock, and forest that had once belonged to his proud ancestors, and whose feet now stood on the very spot where the last knight—his father—had committed the fearful crime of suicide! No wonder he spoke in a broken and agitated voice, and no wonder, man though he was, that his eyes were filled with briny tears."

"Dredged, my boy! who would dare to think of dredging Loch Rora?"

"Why not?" asked Sir Ronald) for, though *landless, landless!* he was still a baronet.)

M'Nab looked fearfully round, and then, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, said, "No body lost in Loch Rora is ever found."

"How does that happen?"

"Hush!" my boy. Don't you know Loch Rora."—again he looked round—"is haunted by a water kelpie?"

Young Ronald trembled, for though he had been well, nay, religiously, brought up, he had drawn in stories of ghosts and goblins, fairies, and kelpies when but an infant from his Highland nurse, and they formed as sure a portion of his creed as they did of worthy old M'Nab's. He therefore asked no more questions; the explanation was quite sufficient, and the interest he felt in the mysterious loch was intensified to an awful degree by the statement just made.

"Now, my boy, I have told you all about your poor father, I have told you his awful fate; I have bewailed my own sins in regard to him; I have told you of the vow which I made here, on this very spot. You know

how I have kept it. Since that fatal night I have watched you, I have taught you, I have fed, clothed, and educated you; though you had been my own son I could not have done more for you. I say not these things, my boy, to lay you under any obligation to me, but only to show you that I have nothing at heart but your best interests, your happiness in this world and your happiness in the next. In a few days you leave me to join one of our gallant Highland regiments. I need give you no directions about your duties in it. I know you will conduct yourself as the brave son of your brave fathers; but, my boy, there is an enemy more dangerous, more difficult to overcome, than any foe you'll ever meet. Your fathers never yielded to mortal man—but they fell before *it*. A Macdonald never knew cowardice; but this dreadful enemy not only subdued him, but verily put the foot on his neck, and Macdonald though he was, he became its slave. The enemy to which I allude is Intemperance! But for it, you would not now be standing a landless orphan on the property which was once your father's. But for it, that father might now have been alive, instead of lying down—down many a fathom deep in the haunted caverns of Loch Rora. And now, my boy, when we part we may never meet again; and ere you go you must kneel down on that spot—the very spot where your poor father last stood—and swear by all that is sacred, that while you live you will never, never touch an intoxicating draught, and then old M'Nab will die happy."

Young Ronald loved and respected his venerable friend as a father; indeed, he had never known another. Besides, he was awed and impressed, in an awful degree, by the fearful account of his father's death, which he had now heard for the first time from the lips of the only man who had witnessed the tragic occurrence, and he had no hesitation whatever in complying at once with the request of his trusty friend. So, raising his cap, he knelt on the green sward, and, while the moonbeams irradiated his young and noble countenance, repeated

the words of solemn vow after M'Nab, holding up his right hand as he spoke. The vow made, M'Nab said: "Thank you, thank you, my boy; pray for sustaining grace to keep that vow, and you will live and die a happy man. Mind, I am not saying that Temperance alone will save you; but the Bible assures us of one thing, and that is, that no drunkard can enter the kingdom. And now, my dearest boy, the object for which I brought you to Loch Rora is accomplished. May God keep and guide you, and bring you at last to His kingdom—through the blood and merits of His own Son, to the praise of His glory! Amen."

CHAPTER VII.

ROSE AND VIOLET.

It was Autumn! The forest was decked in its glorious livery, the air was strong and bracing, and the shooting season had fairly commenced. The Macdougals, who had spent the summer months in London, had all returned, and the Castle was full of company. But, perhaps, before going further, we had better narrate some changes which have taken place since last we visited Glenrora.

First and foremost, then, though we need hardly tell our readers this fact, Miss Hobson is no longer governess there, and the room at the top of the house, which belonged to her, is now empty, and has been so for the last few years: indeed, strictly speaking, Miss Hobson had ceased to exist under that name. She is now Mrs. Graham, and the wife of our young minister has not failed to fulfil all the sweet anticipations of his heart. With heart and hand united, they undertake and prosecute every good work; and, though God has blessed them with two children, Mrs. Graham is still as active as ever, and still assists her husband in every scheme for promoting the Christian and social well-being of their people. After her marriage, Mrs. Macdougal sent her daughters to a celebrated finishing school in the neighbourhood of Hyde Park, where they were taught everything that could be taught—and some things besides; and from which they emerged fully fledged in all the glare and glitter of modern accomplishments, in all the arts of flirtation and conquest, and in all the vanity and self-conceit of young ladies who think they know every-

thing. But we must not altogether include Violet in this description. That she had been spoilt by the *finishing* school there was no doubt, though not by any means to the same degree as her sister Rose, and she had already, during the two months she had spent at Glenrora, and under the influence of Mrs. Graham, with whom she had renewed her old acquaintance, and who was once more exercising a powerful influence over her for good, shown decided symptoms of improvement. Both sisters had made their *début* in London during the past season, and as they were surpassingly beautiful, and of a style which is now rather uncommon—perfect blondes; and as they were, moreover, so much alike in face and figure, these charming twins created quite a sensation, and were quite the fashion. It was even said that the Marquis of Reston, the eldest son of the Duke of Marchester, who had, during the last few seasons, been the great prize of all the designing mammas and plotting young ladies, was caught at last, or that he had, at least, singed his wings while flitting round our brilliant Rose. Of course, such a match would have gladdened the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Macdougal above all things, and, in anticipation of the event, Mr. Macdougal was engaged, or rather he had engaged others, to ransack the musty rolls of Heraldry, in order to prove his direct descent from one of the ancient Thanes of Scotland. The Marquis, though a young man, was old in vice; but this was nothing but what might be expected. Indeed, it would have been hard if the eldest son of a duke might not be permitted to follow the bent of his own inclination in that respect; and so very accommodating were the young ladies who aspired to the honour of sharing his titles and wealth, that they did not hesitate to rally him about some of his pretty mistresses, whom he was not ashamed to recognise in the parks, and even to ride out with in broad day-light! Yes, a dear, delightful, charming creature, was the Marquis—so dashing, so stylish, rode such beautiful horses, was so clever, so agreeable, so full of fun; pity he was so wild—(this was

said with a little shrug of the shoulders)—but withal was so generous, for when he tired of little Fanny, the pretty brunette, he had pensioned her off with a set of diamonds worth some thousands of pounds!

Could anything be more delightful to the heart of a good mother, like Mrs. Macdougal, than the idea of marrying her young, beautiful, and, notwithstanding her faults, her kind-hearted Rose to such a charming, generous, nobleman as the Marquis of Reston? Violet, though as attractive as her sister, had apparently made no conquests; at least none were spoken of, and she did not seem at all to envy her sister's good fortune. Albert, the eldest son, had almost attained his majority, and it was with the view, partly of celebrating that event, and partly of entertaining the Marquis of Reston, who had come on a visit to his fair *fiancée* a few days before, that so many strangers were now assembled in the Castle. Louis, the youngest, had been at Eton for some sessions, but had got permission to remain at home till the Christmas recess was over, in order to share in the expected festivities.

The gentlemen, for the most part, spent the day on the moors, with the exception of the Marquis, who preferred the society of his charming Rose; and she, being an admirable horsewoman, and passionately fond of riding, generally spent her time in scouring the country on her spirited palfrey, attended by his lordship. Nothing, of course, could be more delightful than this to all parties; and, of course, there could be no danger whatever to Rose in the society of such a noble young man as the Marquis! And then came the evening, with its dinner-parties, balls, private theatricals, private *tête-à-têtes* in shady recesses, walks by moonlight on the terrace; when the heat of the rooms, and the exciting wines had fevered every vein; when the head was giddy and the judgment weak, and when Rose and the Marquis would stroll together, through dark fir walks and moonlight glades, his arm around her slender waist, breathing words of sweetest melody into her

willing ears, and looking into the depths of her liquid eyes, re-adjusting the cloak which would fall from her marble shoulders, and—but there is no use in entering into all the details, the reader's imagination will have no difficulty in suggesting them. Of course, in all this there could be no possible danger to Rose! But the time was passing, and the Marquis had not made any formal proposal for her hand. It was true, he talked of their marriage—of their place of residence—of the re-setting of the family jewels. It was true, he talked and drew plans of, a new carriage he was to order for Rose; of a magnificent Arab in his father's stables, which should be hers. It was true he did, and said, and suggested everything, save one—he did not walk up to her father, and say boldly and frankly, "Give me your daughter to be my wife." But this would come next, and it would never do to hurry a marquis—it might drive him off altogether. Such a bird was not so easily caught, and so Mrs. Macdougal allowed her fair young daughter to spend her whole time with him; she encouraged them in all their private excursions; she winked at all their private interviews—the proposals would come by and bye.

In the meantime Violet, who was heart-sick of all the excitement, hurry, and gaiety, and who really had little sympathy with her mamma's fat, porter-bibbing, middle-aged lady friends, although bedecked with feathers and jewels—and still less with the fast young men who accompanied her brothers in field sports—sighed for some gentle heart with which to hold intercourse; and finding this in her quondam governess, slipped away whenever she could, without observation, to the calm repose of the Manse, where her weary spirit found repose, and her heart scope for its affections, in Mrs. Graham's two sweet infants. To nurse, play, and romp with them, was Violet's chief amusement and unfailing delight; and it would have been difficult to find, amid the pomp and grandeur of the Castle, anything so charming or interesting as this fair girl, in the pride of youth and beauty, carrying the baby in her arms, smiling as she disentangled the little chubby fingers from her golden curls,

and playing "bo-peep" with Master Ned, who already thoroughly understood the mysterious art of bobbing his round, rosy face and curly head through the bars of a chair, and then as suddenly withdrawing them.

One morning, Violet entered the neat drawing-room of the Manse unexpectedly. Two gentlemen, strangers to her, were standing at one of the bow windows, which commanded a view of the Castle and grounds; and, on her entrance, they turned round and bowed. Acknowledging the salutation, with a heightened colour, she retired, and went to the nursery, where she found Mrs. Graham, as she expected.

Our minister's wife was seated on a low chair near the fire, with baby on her lap. The little thing was stretching out her feet and dimpled legs to the genial warmth. The mother's full soft eyes were fixed upon her treasure with looks of inexpressible tenderness, while ever and anon, in very happiness, she was singing, with her rich melodious voice, portions of our noble psalms, stopping occasionally to kiss the ruby lips of her babe, or clasp its tiny form to her bosom, where baby would nestle and box and hide her little face. Oh, the happiness of a mother—of such a mother, accepting, and loving, and cherishing this infant life as one of God's greatest and best gifts—as a pledge of His love in this cold rude world—as a messenger of light, and joy, and hope, in this dark dreary wilderness!

Mrs. Graham stretched out her hand to Violet without rising, and said, "Dear Violet, how glad I am to see you again!"

Violet kissed Mrs. Graham, then the baby, remarking as she did so, "How that darling grows! I think you are the most enviable person in the world, Mrs. Graham!"

The mother smiled as she said, "Really, dear Violet, I do sometimes think so, and tremble lest in the midst of so much earthly bliss I should be tempted to forget my God—the giver of every good and perfect gift. Oh, how unworthy I feel of all His goodness!"

By this time Master Ned, who, on seeing his favourite

enter, left off pulling the mane of a wooden horse, and was now by her side, expecting his share of endearments. Nor was he disappointed; for Violet turned round, seized him in her arms, and imprinted several warm kisses on his soft velvet cheeks and cherub mouth. Neddy made a pretence of wiping off Violet's kisses—the ungrateful little scamp! On which she kissed him again, and again, and again, till Master Ned, all breathless with excitement, exclaimed, "'Ou tiss ickle Neddie a' done, Miss Violey."

"Yes, me tiss ickle Neddie all done, every inch of him," replied Violet; and once more she seized the little fellow in her arms, to his great delight.

While this very harmless flirtation was going on, Mr. Graham entered the nursery; and, after a few words of conversation with Violet, said, addressing Mrs. Graham, "By the way, dear, I have asked two gentlemen to share our dinner with us to-day; I hope it won't put you about?

"Not at all," replied Mrs. Graham, who was never wanting in the hospitality becoming a clergyman's wife; "Who are they?"

"Strangers to me," replied her husband; "but, nevertheless, they must be well known in this part of the country. One is the son of the late unfortunate proprietor of Glenrora, and the other his steward, who, it seems, has brought up and educated the orphan lad, and entertains, it appears to me, more than a father's love for him."

"How interesting," said Mrs. Graham; "how it cheers one to find that kindness and fidelity are still alive on the earth."

"Yes," said Mr. Graham; "and to find that they are still reaping their own exceeding great reward. I have seldom or ever met a more interesting man than Mr. M'Nab—he is quite a character, I assure you. I would like you to meet him, Miss Violet. Could you possibly stay?"

I think I might; we do not dine till seven, and you at—"

"Four," said Mrs. Graham. "Oh, there's nothing to hinder you, dear Violet. Just say you will; you know I can't promise any fine French cookery, or rich wine; but you won't mind these things, I am sure."

"Not a bit," said Violet. "What saith the wise man, 'Better is a dinner of herbs,' &c."

"Oh! but I hope we'll give you something better than herbs," said Mrs. Graham, smiling; "though we are *teetotallers*, we don't pretend to be hermits."

"Then I shall cast in my lot with you, to-day," said Violet; but, suddenly looking down at her dress, "Oh! I quite forgot, I can't stay in this; I am sorry, but I can't.

"Come, till I examine you and it," said Mr. Graham, smiling and turning her round. "Let me see—a young lady of prepossessing appearance, with —" Violet put her hand upon his mouth; Mr. Graham took possession of the little white hand with its tapering fingers, and went on—"with clear, soft complexion, auburn ringlets, liquid eyes"—again Violet attempted to stop him, but it was no use, for Mr. Graham seemed determined to make out an inventory of her attractions — "coral lips, swan-like neck, and most becomingly arrayed in a silk dress with flounces, and—"

"Now, really, Mr. Parson," said Violet, blushing deeply, "I know very well how eloquent you can be; but I would much prefer listening to you on any other subject."

"Well, well! I'm done," said Mr. Graham; "I only wished to make it as plain to your mind as it is to mine, that you would be an ornament to any table—aye, even to that of the Emperor of all the Russias!"

"You are incorrigible," said Violet, laughing, "pray, Mrs. Graham, when did your husband become such a flatterer?"

"I never flatter," said Mr. Graham, with mock seriousness.

At this moment a servant entered with the children's dinner. Mr. Graham left the room; and Mrs. Graham

and Violet, after seeing the children dine, descended to the drawing-room. Violet pulled out a bit of embroidery, and began to work most industriously. Mrs. Graham left her for some time to give orders to the servants, and then rejoining her, also took a piece of work, and beguiled the time till dinner with pleasant chat.

"By the way, Violet," said Mrs. Graham, "is this story about Rose's marriage true? Everybody is speaking about it."

"My dear Mrs. Graham," said Violet, "I must say that I suppose it is true, though I have sad misgivings about it."

"How so?" inquired Mrs. Graham.

"There has, as yet, been no formal announcement of the marriage," replied Violet; "and, meanwhile, my sister and the Marquis are inseparable. I am quite sure had he not been a marquis neither mamma nor papa would have tolerated such a thing."

"How does being a marquis make any difference?" inquired Mrs. Graham.

"Oh! mamma thinks it such a grand match, and has quite set her heart upon it, and she fears that, if Rose is separated from him, it might drive him off."

"Certainly not, if his intentions are honourable," said Mrs. Graham. "What sort of a man is the marquis?"

"Oh! he is very handsome, and aristocratic looking, and——"

"But I mean," interrupted Mrs. Graham, "what is his character?"

"Pretty good, as the world goes," said Violet. "*You* would think it shocking, and I am inclined to be of your opinion. I would not like to repeat the stories that are told of him."

"Nor need you, dear Violet; I know too well what your description means! Does Rose like him, or is she fascinated with the prospect of making a brilliant match?"

"She declares she adores him. Love is not strong enough for Rose; but I am pretty sure the idea of being
ess has thrown a glamour over my poor sister."

"Well! even in the event of all turning out as well as your parents hope, I should not feel inclined to augur much happiness for our poor Rose," said Mrs. Graham, sighing. "The responsibility that rests on parents—especially on mothers—is very great; and it is sad to think how often a daughter's happiness is blighted here, and ruined hereafter, by their want of consideration!"

Violet sighed, and bent her head closely over her work, while something like a tear trickled slowly down her cheek. She could not but feel how applicable Mrs. Graham's remark was to her own dear mother, to whose many faults she found it impossible to blind her eyes.

After a pause, Mrs. Graham resumed the conversation. But this time it was about her own little ones, a subject into which Violet always entered *con amore;* and so, from one thing to another, till, the hour brought the bell for dressing, and Violet, who had got over her difficulty, went to arrange one or two stray curls, and shake out the folds of her dress. These little duties performed, and a soft china rose, with its dark leaves, placed tastefully in her hair, she returned to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER VIII.

DINNER IN THE MANSE.

On entering the drawing-room Violet found the two gentlemen she had seen in the morning, and Mr. and Mrs. Graham. The latter immediately introduced Violet to Sir Ronald, and both the young people gazed upon each other with mutual interest—the landless son of Glenrora's late proprietor, and the lovely, richly dowered daughter of its present. Then Violet was introduced to M'Nab—the venerable old man whom she had remained to meet. Dinner was soon announced, and the party proceeded to the dining-room, and assembled round Mr. Graham's hospitable board. Here, all was plain and unostentatious; but comfortable, well-cooked, and abundant; all was neat, and tasteful, and pleasing to the eye; from the snowy table cloth—that never failing proof of good housewifery—to the shining plate and brilliant crystal: from the nicely-garnished fish to the exquisitely green vegetables: from the clear currant jelly to the elegant centre-piece of China roses, mignionette, and drooping fuschias, which the frosts had still spared. But the sideboard struck the eye at once as being different entirely from what is generally seen. The ordinary pieces of plate were there, it is true, but there was no wine of any kind whatever; and no ugly black bottles beneath disfigured the general elegance of the apartment. Instead of wine, however, there was a great variety of rich ripe fruit, rosy apples, large soft pears, some rich clusters of ripe grapes, and two or three kinds of dried fruit—while two handsome large crystal jugs, filled with cream, did away with the want of decanters.

Notwithstanding the want of French cookery and racy wines, Violet thought she never enjoyed a dinner party more: there was so much true hospitality, so much genial kindness, so much hearty pleasure, and each did his utmost to entertain the other, without appearing to make any special effort. At the time when the servant generally takes round the wine, Mr. Graham, not knowing the opinions of his guests, thought some explanation due to them for the omission of this part of routine, and said, 'That he hoped they would excuse the want of wine as, from his position, he considered himself not only bound to abstain himself, but to do every thing in his power to prevent others participating in a custom which was the allowed cause of so much misery.'

Sir Ronald smiled, and M'Nab said, "No apology is necessary in our case, Mr. Graham; neither my young friend nor I ever taste anything but water; and such water!" continued he, putting some into his tumbler and holding it up to the light. "I never saw anything purer, clearer, and, I am convinced, more wholesome."

"I am glad you like my wine," said Mrs. Graham; "I quite pique myself on the quality of the water."

"And well you may, ma'am," said old M'Nab; "I think, with such water, one could not have the shadow of an excuse for any mixture."

"And yet you will be amused when I tell you that it used to be quite in repute for mixing grog and making toddy; people would come a considerable distance to the minister's well to obtain a supply for that purpose; and it's not long since I got an end put to the practice."

"The minister's well," said M'Nab; "I might have remembered it; and now that you mention it, my memory brings back many instances when the water from it was used for grog and toddy." The retrospect seemed to pain the old man, for a shade of sadness swept across his face as he added—"Ay, ay, there have been many changes since those days."

"And some of them for the better, my worthy friend,"

said Mr. Graham, "and I flatter myself that forbidding the use of the water of the minister's well for such a silly —not to say dangerous—purpose, is not the worst of them."

While this conversation was going on, Violet lifted her tumbler to her lips and drank part of the contents. The water felt very cold and chill, and made her shiver; moreover, it tasted to her very insipid. It was long since Violet had tasted simple water. She put down her tumbler without making any remark, and, as she thought, unobserved; but she was mistaken, for both Mrs. Graham and Sir Ronald had noticed the shiver, and each had put an interpretation upon it.

With the dessert came the children, arrayed in their pretty white frocks, with the sleeves tied down on their chubby shoulders with great bows of rose-coloured ribbon. Any one who saw the bright look in the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Graham could see how fond and proud they were of their children. Neddy shook hands most manfully, and then took possession of his high chair, which, at Violet's request, had been placed beside her; while baby, who was inclined to be shy, took a sly peep ever and anon at the strangers, hiding her face, after every new exertion in this way, in her mother's bosom. Violet had now ample employment in supplying the wants of Master Ned, who did abundant justice to the grapes and other ripe fruits, allaying his thirst occasionally with a good hearty draught of the pure water.

"It does one's heart good to see your boy," said M'Nab. "How healthy—how happy he is! How he does enjoy those wholesome fruits which God has so bountifully lavished upon man! I might safely presage that that boy will never be a *drunkard*."

"God forbid that he should," replied Mr. Graham, with affecting seriousness. "Never, while under my roof, shall he have any temptation to become so; and I trust the habits formed in childhood and youth may, with God's blessing, preserve him from the many temptations to which, alas! in our Christian country, so many of our best and most hopeful young men are exposed."

Mrs. Graham's large, soft eyes, were filled with tears, at the bare possibility of anything so dreadful happening to her darling Ned; and she kissed baby to conceal her emotion.

How many a mother—as tender-hearted—as loving—as tremblingly alive to the prospects of her child's future happiness as Mrs. Graham—does not hesitate to take the glass, filled with strong red wine, and put it to the coral lips of her innocent child.

The ladies having risen and moved into the drawing-room, the children accompanied them, and the gentlemen speedily followed. Coffee was served, and Violet found that she would require to go. It was past six, so she tore herself unwillingly away. In a few minutes she was ready, and, after kissing Ned and baby about a dozen times, she turned to leave the room. The three gentlemen followed; it was almost dark, and they insisted on accompanying her so far, while Mr. Graham declared it was a mere matter of selfishness with him. Violet protested that she required no protection, and yet willingly accepted the escort. And so they set out; and leaving the winding path that led from the Manse, entered the grounds by a small gate, which opened on a short and direct cut to the Castle. The walk admitting only two, Sir Ronald and Violet went first, while Mr. Graham and M'Nab followed.

It was an evening of singular beauty. The sun, which had just set, was still painting the western sky with glory; crimson, purple, and gold were tinting the clouds with grandeur, and reflecting on the trees and mountains till the trees and their russet foliage shone like burnished gold, and the mountains seemed to melt away in a misty sea of radiance; while in the east the moon, now almost full, was slowly rising in the cold blue sky above a forest of ancient firs which stood out, dark and distinct, against the blue background. The whole scene had that stillness about it which can be felt, that air of calm, solemn, majestic repose which affects powerfully man's restless spirit, and in tones which cannot be resisted, says:—

"Peace, be still." The spell operated strongly upon Sir Ronald and Violet, who gave themselves up to the enchantment of the hour and walked on in silence, while Mr. Graham and M'Nab seemed to have fallen on stories of a time long gone by, for now and again a word would fall on the ears of Sir Ronald and Violet which served to indicate the subject of their conversation. At last, Sir Ronald broke silence and said:—"It seems very strange, but yet this landscape appears perfectly familiar to me—as familiar as though I had visited it all, in a dream, last night."

"It has only been asleep in your memory," said Violet; "one does not easily forget the scenes of youth."

"But yet I don't remember ever having been here, though I possibly may—indeed, must have been; for the recollection rises up so vividly before me, that every corner and turn seems to me like the faces of dear old friends. I am sure I would recognise the Castle and the terrace; M'Nab has often described them to me, and there is one spot very dear to me—just one, and that I would like to see again—a large room with three handsome windows, facing the west—my nursery, from whence I often gazed with childish wonder upon that same setting sun, and wondered if that was the gate by which the great God took those who loved him to His own glorious home. Yes, I would like to see that room again!"

"I know the apartment well to which you refer," said Violet. "It was our school-room, and I, too, have often gazed with delight upon the scene you describe, though I should scarcely like to give *my* childish ideas of it; I fear they were not quite so orthodox as yours, Sir Ronald! But will you not come and see papa to-morrow? I am sure he would welcome you, and you could visit all the places which were dear to you as a child."

"I wish I could, Miss Macdougal; nothing could give me greater pleasure," replied Sir Ronald; "but to-morrow I leave Scotland to join my regiment in Chatham. When I may return I know not—possibly never. You may know, Miss Macdougal, that I have nothing in this

world to depend upon save a brave heart and a strong arm; and I must make my way to fortune and fame by my own exertions; and this," he added, smiling and colouring, "though the blood of a hundred chieftains flows in my veins! And now I have seen the last, I doubt not, of Glenrora—its hills and dales—its cloud-capped mountains and sweeping moorlands—its lonely glens and haunted caverns; and though I have no tie to Scotland, or Glenrora, and though I have no friend in the world, but worthy old M'Nab, I cannot help feeling sad at the prospect of leaving them for ever."

The sad tone found an echo in Violet's heart; but she spoke cheerfully as she said, "You will forget them, Sir Ronald!"

"Never!" He gazed an instant on her soft fair face, so full of expression, and added, "Nor——" a word trembled upon his lips—but it was not uttered.

The Castle was distant now little more than a stone's throw, and Mr. Graham coming forward said: "Now that Miss Macdougal is past all danger, I think we may bid her good evening."

Violet shook hands with them all—Sir Ronald last. Her hand was held a little longer in his than was necessary—but they were parting for ever! And though they had seen each other for the first time only a few hours before, they felt already as if they had been friends for years!

After parting from her friends, Violet walked on more rapidly; and the road here making a sharp turn, brought the front of the Castle, with its ancient door-way, full in view. Servants were leading away riding horses; and Violet saw at a glance that Rose's palfrey was one of them, and inferred that she had just returned. As she approached nearer, she perceived the figure of a man, pacing up and down a side walk, smoking a cigar. She recognised him to be the Marquis, and would willingly have avoided him; but this was impossible, as he had evidently seen her, and was coming forward to meet her. Taking his cigar from his mouth, and puffing a great

cloud of smoke into the air, he said, "Ah, my pretty hermit, have I caught you at last? I could swear I had not seen that lovely face for six weeks and more."

"Then your Lordship would swear falsely," said Violet; "for I had the pleasure of seeing yours no farther back than last night, about ten o'clock."

"'Pon my honour you must have been mistaken; for I never could have forgotten such a charming apparition. But where now?—will you fly the instant I meet you?"

"Nay, my lord, but time calls, and I can delay no longer;" and so saying, she attempted to push forward; but the Marquis still stood as if determined to detain her.

"What a charming creature you are!" he exclaimed, with looks of unfeigned admiration; "'pon my honour, I wish I had lived in the good old times, when one might wed two such glorious sisters at the same time!"

"My lord, permit me to pass, you are becoming insolent."

"Insolent, my charmer! now you are wrong; I speak the honest sentiments of my heart!"

"Your heart, I fear, is worth little," said Violet with indignation, for her whole nature was revolting at his extraordinary behaviour; and making a sudden spring to one side, she passed him, and fled rapidly to the house.

The Marquis muttered some words of imprecation, and once more putting his cigar in his mouth, consoled himself, as he best could, for what he was pleased to style Violet's impertinence.

Meanwhile, Rose had just returned from a long and exciting ride; and after dismounting, with the tender assistance of the Marquis, she entered the house. Instead, however, of going to her room to dress for dinner, she went straight to the dining-room, where she found the butler, as she expected, engaged in superintending the preparations for dinner. Addressing him, she said, "Pray, Price, get me a glass of sherry, immediately; I am absolutely fainting!"

Price went to fulfil her request, when Rose suddenly exclaimed, "You had better give me brandy, it will do me more good."

The butler hesitated—"If I might be permitted to express my opinion, Miss Macdougal, I would——"

"Silence, sirrah! mind your own business. The brandy —quick!"

Price poured out the brandy. Rose seized it, and swallowed the glassful; then holding out the glass, she said, "Now, another—quick!"

The butler gazed at her with something approaching to terror, and then said, slowly and deliberately, "*No*, Miss Macdougal, I will not—I *dare* not."

"You will not—you *dare* not," exclaimed Rose, tossing back her curls, while her eyes flashed, and her countenance was marked by unutterable scorn—"then I *will* and I *dare!*" and, snatching the bottle from his hand, she filled the glass once more, emptied it, and sailed from the room like a queen, leaving poor Price in a state of inexpressible dismay.

"That's a smart 'un," said one of the footmen to Sam, the page, with a knowing wink; "a chip of the old block, an' no mistake, I think."

Sam placed his thumb to his nose in the approved fashion, and replied, "Ay, that she is, a rare 'un; somethin' 'll come o' this you'll see, or my name's not Sam Jones!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASQUERADE.

And now the weeks were passing, and the great event in which all the rejoicings and festivities were to culminate drew on apace.

On the first day of November, Albert—Mr. Macdougal's first-born—would attain his twenty-first year; and the greatest exertions were made to celebrate this important event in a proper and becoming manner. A dinner was to be provided in a large hall, for all the tenantry on the Glenrora estate, with a dance afterwards for their wives and daughters; while in the Castle a number of the more intimate friends of the family were to dine together; and then there was to be a ball—such as had never before taken place in the county, and to which everyone of any standing in the said county was invited. For some days two or three French cooks had been employed mixing, and making, and concocting, and dyeing, and staining, and making good, wholesome, natural food look as unnatural and be as unwholesome as possible; already, too, many gardeners were busied in twining garlands of bay and bunches of holly in the principal rooms, and beautifying as much as an unstinted supply of holly, laurel, and ivy could do. There was no yew nor cypress amidst the bays. All was to be joy and gladness on the commemoration of Albert's natal night. On the following morning most of the guests who had been entertained at the Castle were to take their departure—the Marquis among others; and the only shadow cast upon the brilliant festivities about to take place arose from Mrs. and Mr. Macdougal's anxiety that he should make his proposal for Rose in a formal manner.

The ball, at the suggestion of Rose and the Marquis, was to be a masquerade; this being more *distingué* than an ordinary ball, and giving more license for all kinds of fun. The greatest secrecy was maintained about the characters to be personated, and the dresses to be worn.

Rose and Violet were not at all agreed on this subject. Hitherto the twin sisters had always appeared in public dressed precisely in the same manner; but now Rose was determined to personate Juno, Diana, or some one or other of the heathen goddesses, while Violet was just as determined to appear in a simple ball dress; and in this she was privately supported by Mrs. Graham, who had expressed her most decided aversion to masquerading, and the evils that generally follow in its train. As the sisters, therefore, could not agree, something very like a quarrel arose between them, which ended in Rose ordering her dress without telling Violet anything about it, and all Violet's endeavours to find out what character she meant to personate were equally futile. For some time past there had been a growing want of sympathy between the sisters; Rose was so engrossed in her passionate love for the Marquis—so engrossed in everything that affected her own interest—so exacting, overbearing, and passionate, that it was next to impossible to love her. All the bad traits in her character had been developed to an alarming extent during the past week, and though she could be kind and good-humoured when she chose, she, unfortunately, very seldom did choose. She lavished all the love of her nature on the Marquis, and reserved for her parents, brothers, and only sister, nothing but rude, pert, and angry words. Her mother and father bore her rudeness with composure—they could have borne anything from their brilliant daughter. Would she not one day be the Duchess of Marchester? Such a prospect must, of necessity, cover a multitude of faults! Violet talked seldom to her. She did not wish to quarrel with her only sister—the playmate of her youth, and she could not but feel that her acquaintance with the Marquis, and the words of honied flattery she was in the habit,

daily and hourly, of hearing from his lips, had produced the worst effects upon Rose's character. With her eldest brother, Albert, Rose had a regular battle whenever opportunity occurred. He invariably declared "that her fine Marquis would jilt her," which, of course, was just the point on which Rose felt most tender; and a few days before the event for which such preparations had been made, words had run so high between them, that she had been heard to declare "that sooner than appear at the ball in celebration of his birthday, she would throw her robe in the fire, and lock herself up in one of the dungeons of the Castle." This was, however, nothing but bravado, and as such was treated.

On the last day of October, the Marquis of Reston requested a private interview with Mr. Macdougal. This was at once granted, and with proud head and beating heart the elated father led the way into his "sanctum," to receive, as he doubted not, proposals for the hand of his fair Rose. Nor was he mistaken, for the Marquis went at once to the point, and said—"I doubt not, Mr. Macdougal, you have a pretty good idea what I wish to say to you."

Mr. Macdougal bowed: "I suppose I must say I have; your lordship has, for some time, been paying marked attention to my daughter, Rose."

"Yes; your daughter (you will pardon me calling her Rose) is very dear to me—has been so for some time; I cannot exist longer without her; and I come now to ask your consent to our union."

Mr. Macdougal bowed once more; he felt proud—flattered—and "would have the greatest delight in bestowing his daughter's hand on the Marquis."

The Marquis shook hands with his intended father-in-law, and thanked him for the priceless treasure he was about to bestow upon him. "With regard to the settlements," the Marquis went on to say, "they would be handed over to his man of business, and he had no doubt arranged according to his (Mr. Macdougal's) satisfaction." And with these words his lordship turned to go.

Mr. Macdougal would willingly have detained him. Never before did he feel such a desire to speak. The all-important subject seemed to him to have been treated with unbecoming brevity. Mr. Macdougal had expected to have been closeted with the Marquis for two hours, at least; to have expatiated on Rose's beauty—her qualifications—her dowry (for Macdougal was rich)—her descent, as it was now in his power to prove it, from some of the most ancient families in Scotland. But, alas! it was not necessary; the Marquis was gone, and the whole affair had not required five minutes. But it was all right, at last; and so, in exuberant spirits, he rushed into Mrs. Macdougal's room, which she had not yet left this morning, and, embracing her, said—"Congratulate me, dearest, I have had an interview with the Marquis this morning, and—"

"The Marquis! has he proposed?" exclaimed his wife.

"I was just going to tell you, my dear; will you let me go on?"

"Just answer me one thing," said his wife. "Has he proposed?"

"Yes; will that please you?"

Mrs. Macdougal uttered an exclamation of joy; and then the worthy couple spent the greater part of the day in talking of the success of their plans, the brilliant prospects of their daughter, and the admirable way in which the whole affair had been managed. While, now and again, Mrs. Macdougal would, in self-laudation, give vent to some such remark as, "Didn't I tell you it would be all right?" or, "I am sure I always knew it would never do to hurry the Marquis."

While the happy parents were congratulating themselves on the success of their ambitious schemes, the Marquis set out on horseback, but, strange to say, on this day, of all others, alone; and Rose, under pretence of a headache, confined herself to her chamber. Violet entered to enquire for her; but she was answered querulously "that she was far from well, and *wished (Rose's* wishes were law) to be left alone." Her sister was

retiring, when her eye fell upon a crystal bottle standing on the dressing-table, and walking up she lifted it to examine it, when Rose suddenly got up from the couch, and snatched it from her hand, saying,

"Violet, I really wish you would mind your own affairs: you are becoming quite a bore!"

The fair girl gazed anxiously—almost sorrowfully—on her sister's face as she asked, "What is it Rose; not *brandy*, surely?"

"Yes, it is brandy," replied Rose; "pray what is that to you?"

"It is everything to me," replied Violet, her eyes filling with tears. "Oh, dearest Rose, I implore you by every sacred tie that binds us—by the memory of early days—by our childish love—put away that accursed thing! For the sake of father, mother, all that's dear to you, I conjure you, Rose, tamper with it no longer!" Violet's pale cheek was flushed, and she spoke more eagerly and rapidly than she was wont.

Rose, on the contrary, was quite calm, and she eyed her sister with provoking composure as she said:—"Really, Violet, you must allow me to be the best judge in matters so nearly concerning myself; I take this brandy as a *medicine*, my constitution requires a stimulant. Will that satisfy you?"

"Rose, you are treading on a volcano! I have long suspected this; *now* my worst fears are confirmed!"

"*Your* worst fears! 'Pon my word that is good," said Rose, laughing disdainfully. "You are becoming quite a preacher; really, you should take orders!"

"Oh, Rose! it is no laughing matter," sobbed Violet, now weeping downright. "If you——"

"Once for all, are we to have an end of this?" exclaimed Rose imperiously. "Will you leave my room immediately? or shall I be compelled to put you out?" And Rose stamped the ground with her little foot.

Violet saw that further remonstrance would be of no avail, and unwillingly left the room, and Rose in company with her brandy bottle!

Mr. Macdougal's theory was being developed. He had sowed thistles—he was about to reap the harvest.

The anniversary of Albert's natal day broke wet and gloomy, and many were the anxious glances cast by those assembled round the large breakfast-table, towards the windows; and many were the opinions hazarded on the prospects of the weather, for all were anxious that the day might prove fine, at least as fine as might be expected at that advanced season of the year. About eleven o'clock, however, their fears were dispelled, for, the clouds dispersing and rolling away towards the mountains, the sun shone forth, and nature brightened under his kindly beams.

Activity was now the order of the day—all were preparing for their own preconcerted plans of pleasure—some to the moors, others to some races which had been arranged, while Rose and the Marquis determined to spend their last day together for some time in visiting a celebrated waterfall at a considerable distance from Glenrora. So their horses were ordered early, and they lost no time in starting. The Marquis was in high spirits, and spoke and laughed gaily with every one; but it was observed that his betrothed looked restless and agitated, and as if she had spent a sleepless night. Violet looked at her sister with anxiety, but she said nothing. After they had gone Violet took a solitary walk as far as Loch Rora. She felt sad and dejected, she knew not at what. A fearful gloom, a foreboding of evil, a sort of presentiment, flung a dark shadow over her usually tranquil spirit, and do what she might she could not shake it off.

It is not our intention to enter into the details of the festivities on this occasion, as they have little or nothing to do with our story. Suffice it to say that the dinner to the tenantry was as sumptuous, and the dinner to the *èlite* in the Castle as *rechérché*, as might be expected from a man of Mr. Macdougal's means, determined to spare no expense in the entertainment of his guests. The tenants were supplied with beer, strong ale, and whisky in abundance; and if they were not perfectly happy, it

was not for want either of food or strong drink. Indeed, we are inclined to think that not a few of them would suffer rather severe headaches on the morrow, as the penalty of the strong potions they drank in honour of Mr. Albert's birthday.

The Marquis and Rose were not in time for dinner; but this gave her parents no uneasiness, as the lovers had a considerable distance to ride before they could reach the picturesque spot they had proposed visiting, and as a thousand and one trifling things might have occurred to detain them. Mrs. Macdougal, then, entertained her guests with the most lady-like composure, undisturbed by one shadow of anxiety about her absent daughter; and feeling assured that Rose would be in good time for the masquerade, knowing her taste, as she did pretty well, on such matters. So, dinner over, her mother arrayed her little round figure (she had lost all the elegance which had once characterised her, and was now as round and stumpy as one of the casks of her favourite beverage) in a gorgeous dress, from the pattern of Mary Queen of Scots, for whom the little fat lady entertained the most absolute veneration, and whom she fancied she somewhat resembled. She had finished dressing, but was still contemplating herself in the mirror, while her maid bestowed a few finishing touches on her coiffure, when Violet entered, dressed elegantly and becomingly, in a simple ball dress of white lace, looped up with bunches of roses, over a satin skirt, and wearing a garland of roses, to correspond, round her graceful head.

"How pretty you look, Violet," said her mamma, turning from the contemplation of her own fat figure, to survey her beautiful daughter; "how very well you look; only I wish you had humoured Rose and us so far as to have appeared in some character."

"Pray, dearest mamma, say no more on that subject; I will do my utmost to please you in all matters which do not offend my conscience. But, mamma, I know not what to think—Rose and the Marquis have not yet returned."

"Not yet!" said Mrs. Macdougal, glancing at a small clock upon the mantel piece, "that is strange; it is now past nine—they will be here immediately."

"Oh, I hope so!" exclaimed Violet. "Mamma, I fear some accident has happened to Rose."

"Oh, nonsense," said her mother, smiling; you are becoming quite nervous, Violet. I wish you would take as much exercise as your sister; you are too reserved—too retiring. But come, tell me what you think of my dress?"

"It is very nice, mamma," said Violet; who, if the truth must be told, scarcely looked at it.

"Well! I *am* like that picture of Mary in Holyrood! I hope I won't get beheaded like her, poor woman."

Violet sighed. She could not help wondering how her mamma could think of anything but Rose, though she said nothing.

The carriages were now arriving rapidly, and setting down their occupants; so, Mrs. Macdougal, putting her arm in Violet's, descended to the suite of rooms which had been fitted up for the masquerade.

The scene which met their eyes on entering was more like the realms of fairy-land than anything in this matter-of-fact, hard-working world. Four large rooms had been fitted up for the occasion. They were richly festooned with evergreens, fragrant with exotics, brilliant with innumerable lights, and each great window commanded views of different glades and vistas, rendered darkly visible by means of thousands of variegated lamps, and afforded an extraordinary contrast to the dazzling light within. These rooms were filled with motley groups, representing natives of every nation under the sun—from the Chinese, with his tail, to the Red Indian of the Far West, with his scalping-knife, feathers, and war-paint. Isolated individuals were there, representing almost every extraordinary character that ever moved on this changing scene—from Alexander the Great to Napoleon—from Socrates to Pope Pius. Yes, it was a motley scene! Emperors, kings, lawyers, politicians divines, actors,

actresses, mountebanks, nuns, and monks—all figured there, and were all engrossed with the follies of the passing hour. Violet, in her pure sweet dress, looked and felt out of place among the ribaldry and gaiety of the crowd; and, having danced a minuet with a stately monk, she managed to disappear in the crowd, and was seriously thinking of escaping to her room, when she felt her dress touched behind. Looking round, she perceived little Sam, the page, who slipped a small note into her hand. Violet moved to a deserted corner of the room, followed by Sam, her heart beating violently, and opening the note, which was written hurriedly in pencil, and in a hand which she at once recognised as Mrs. Graham's, she read as follows:—

"*Dearest Violet,—A fearful calamity hangs over your house. Mr. Graham waits in the hall; get your papa to speak with him immediately, he can explain all. With prompt measures your poor sister's ruin may yet be prevented. God grant it may!*"

Violet looked fearfully round to see if any one had marked her emotion; her heart was throbbing, her cheek was flushed, and drops of cold perspiration were coursing over her body. No one was near, however, but the page, who was watching her face with dilated eye and flushed countenance. Violet paused for a moment and pressed her hand to her brow, considering what course she ought to pursue. While she did so her eye fell on Sam's eager face, and she saw at once that the lad comprehended the whole affair. Laying her hand on his shoulder, Violet said, "Sam, could you find papa?"

"Yes, Miss Violet."

"Well, do so immediately; take him to Mr. Graham in the hall, and then come to our boudoir up stairs; I wish to speak with you."

"Yes, Miss Violet," and the boy disappeared. Little did Violet know that the poor insignificant page had that day ridden nearly fifty miles in his anxiety to save his master's daughter from dishonour.

Violet made her way with difficulty to her own sitting-room; her legs shook beneath her, her head was giddy; she could not realise the awful horror of the case. Meanwhile strains of music filled the Castle, and sounds of song and laughter fell upon the ear. She had passed Mr. Graham in the hall, but they had not spoken; he had wrung her hand and gazed upon her face with a look almost as wretched as her own. Both had felt that words were too feeble to express their anguish. On reaching her boudoir, which Rose and she had shared in common, her eye fell upon many objects which forcibly recalled her poor sister. She buried her head in the couch, and pressed her hands tightly upon it to still its throbbing. After what seemed to her an age, but in reality only a quarter of an hour, a knock was heard at the door, and in reply to Violet's summons—"Come in!" Sam entered. The light fell upon him, and Violet noticed that the page's dress was bespattered with mud, and that his hair was as wet as if he had come from a bath.

When he entered, Violet could scarcely speak, but making an effort, she said—"Well, Sam, did you find papa?"

"Yes, Miss Violet, and——"

"Go on, go on, Sam; tell me all, everything," said Violet, spasmodically. "But you look tired, poor boy," she continued; "sit down, Sam."

Sam obeyed his mistress, and said—"When I found the master, ma'am, he would scarce come with me."

"But he did go to Mr. Graham, did he not?" asked Violet, breathlessly.

"Yes, Miss Violet, and when he heard what Mr. Graham told him, he took on awful, and began to storm and curse, and ordered horses immediately; an' he got them too," said the boy, a ray of brightness passing across his wearied face; "for the three best were standing at the door ready saddled. I ordered them half-an-hour before. There was Bob, the steeple——"

"Well, well," said Violet, interrupting him, but in a

kind voice; "never mind the names of the horses, just now; what did papa do?"

"Do! Why, Miss Violet, he mounted and set off with two servants. By this time he is a few miles on his way."

"Where to, Sam?" asked Violet.

"To Greenock, to be sure," said Sam; "but I forgot, you could not know that, ma'am. I hope he'll catch that rascal and shoot him, that's all I wish, ma'am; an' there's a good chance, for Bob the racer——"

"How did Mr. Graham come to know all this, I wonder," said Violet, who spoke more hopefully now that measures were set agoing to save her sister.

"*I* told him," said the boy.

"*You*, Sam, what do you mean? you surprise me," said Violet.

"You see, Miss Violet; I'll tell ye jist exactly how it happened. Two or three days ago I was in the stables, and I heard the valet of the Marquis and his groom talking away together. They did not think I was paying any attention; but they were wrong there, for I never heard anything so well in all my life. Well, ye see, ma'am, as the groom was rubbing down the Marquis's strong roan, he says to the valet, 'His lordship's not goin' to ride 'Sultan' for two or three days; he wishes him kept fresh for a particular purpose; an' I'm to take him an' this beauty,' giving the black Arab a slap on the side, 'to the village of Kilwun, about half way to Greenock, on the day after to-morrow. I wonder what devilry his lordship's after now.'

"'Devilry!' says the valet, 'no devilry at all. Ma good master is joost goin' to take off the pretty jeune Mademoiselle Rose, dat is all,' and he said something in French which I could not understand.

"'Well,' says the groom, 'if that's not a piece of devilry I don't know what devilry is; but it's not the first his precious lordship 's ha'e been engaged in. I don't think I'll stand it any longer; but he does give a good wage.'

"'Ay! dat he dows,' says the valet; 'he is a vairy

good maister, an' he loves the young ladie, an' he is goin' to take her to 'ma belle France—ma belle France!' and the little man jumped and danced, and shouted like a madman. After a while he goes on again, an' he says, 'An' de sheep is in de bay, an' we shall all be so happy in 'la belle France.'

"Here the groom looked up, and seein' me attendin' (for by this time I forgot to pretend I was not), he comes right up to me, an' he says, 'Ye have been makin' a good use o' yere ears, my smart 'un; but, mind ye, if I hear a whisper o' moshier's mad story, I'll wring them off your head,' an' he shook his hand in my face; but I did not mind him, Miss Violet.

"Oh, Sam," said Violet, "why did you not tell papa all this?"

"It would have been no use, Miss Violet. Mr. Macdougal never would have believed anything half so bad of the Marquis; an,' besides, I was not sure but it might be a mad story of the Frenchman's, as the groom said; so I just made up my mind to watch; an' when the Marquis's horses were sent away two days ago, I begun to fear that there might be some truth in what I heard, an' to think what I could do to save poor Miss Rose. Well, Miss Violet, I thought it was no use speakin' to your papa, and so the next best thing I could think of was to go to Mr. Graham."

"That was very good," interrupted Violet; "but go on."

"I thought he would tell me what was best to do; an' I was right, Miss Violet. Had he been Miss Rose's father he could not have been more anxious about her. Well, ye see, when I told him, he walked up an' down the room a long time without speakin'. At last he looks up, and says, 'Sam,' says he, 'you've behaved well, and with God's assistance we must save that poor young lady. I'll start immediately for Kilwun, where the horses have been sent, and you will watch the Marquis's movements at home; and the first time Miss Rose and he go out to ride together you must follow them, Sam.

You understand me, my good lad?' 'Yes, sir,' says I, an' comes away. An' so you see, Miss Violet, I had not long to wait, for this morning off goes Miss Rose and the Marquis, an' whenever I heard their horses was ordered, away I goes an' saddles a good strong horse, an' after giving them about five minutes' start, away I goes, an' soon overtakes the Marquis's servant, an' says he, 'Halloa! Sam, is his you? What wind's brought ye here to-day?' 'A good wind,' says I. 'Master's sent me to attend on Miss Rose;' an' so we rode on pretty fast, but not at all in the direction of the Falls. Bye-and-bye the Marquis looked round, an' seeing me following, he stopped and made a sign to his servant, who rode up to his master, and then returned with orders for me to go home. But this I would not do. 'I came to attend upon Miss Rose,' says I, 'an' I won't return till she does.' After a long an' quick ride, stopping once at a public-house to give our horses a feed, we reached Kilwun about five o'clock, an' as we rode in about to the inn, what should I see standing at the door but the Marquis's horses, fresh an' ready saddled, held by a groom. Well, ye see, Miss Violet, the Marquis an' Miss Rose went in to have some refreshment, an' they had not been in five minutes when they sent for me; I went, an' when I entered the room where they were, Miss Rose, who was sitting on a sofa, with her hat in her hand, an' her long, beautiful curls all hanging out from her net, looks up, an' says in her own pretty way, 'Oh! Sam, what's brought you with us to-day? We have taken a much longer ride than we intended, an' I must rest here all night; so you must go home and tell papa and mamma that, for they will be anxious.' While she was speakin', a waiter entered with brandy and water an' glasses, an' the Marquis filled a glass an' gave it to Miss Rose, saying, 'It will do you good, dearest;' an' Miss Rose smiled, an' held out her hand, an' the Marquis kissed it; an' after taking off the glass, she says to the Marquis, 'Give that poor lad a glass.' 'Surely,' says the Marquis, an' with that he hands me a glass. 'Thank

your lordship,' says I, 'but I never takes brandy.' 'Whisky, then,' says the Marquis, putting his hand on the bell. 'Nor whisky, either,' says I. But at that instant a servant opens the door, an' announces Mr. Graham. Miss Rose started as if she had been shot, an' sprung to her feet. The Marquis looked astonished. 'This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Graham,' said Miss Rose. 'Pray, may I ask to what we are indebted for it?' 'Certainly, Miss Macdougal. I have come to restore you to your friends, and to save you from that villain (fixing his eyes on the Marquis), who has taken advantage of a father's hospitality to rob him of his daughter."

"What did the Marquis do?" asked Violet.

"He did nothing," replied Sam. "He seemed frightened at Mr. Graham; he did look so awful."

"And my sister?" once more inquired Violet.

"Miss Rose tossed her head, ma'am, thanked Mr. Graham for his trouble, and told him he might go home whenever he chose; for she had quite made up her mind, and, for that matter, she would follow the Marquis to the end of the world!"

"My poor, poor sister!" sighed Violet. "Did anything more pass, Sam?"

"A great deal more, Miss Violet; but I can't tell half of what Mr. Graham said. He spoke so beautiful that I could not help weeping; an' Miss Rose began weeping too; but she was in a great rage all the time, an' stamped her foot, an' asked the Marquis 'how long he was going to allow her to bear that fellow's insolence,' pointing to Mr. Graham. And then the Marquis began to curse an' swear, an' say he would kick him out, an' horsewhip him; but Mr. Graham did not mind him; but, looking at him, said, 'Your lordship must answer one day at God's judgment-seat for this great evil you have wrought.' An' then, turning to Miss Rose, he said, 'Poor girl, my heart bleeds for you, and ere long you will be the first to bewail your present madness! Come, Sam,' said he, putting his hand on my shoulder, 'we can do no good here.' An' so we left them, and came home.

An' now, I only hope your father will catch them before they sail, for he can compel Miss Rose to come back."

"Oh! I hope so—I hope so!" sobbed Violet, who, during Sam's recital, had found relief for her misery in tears. "And now, Sam, she added, whatever befals my poor sister, you have done your duty like a brave lad; you may now go to bed; but before you go, tell the butler that Miss Violet wishes him to give you a glass of wine."

"Thank you ma'am," "but I would rather not have it."

"Not have the wine, Sam; very well, you may please yourself. Go to bed now, at all events, you need rest."

When he was gone, Violet gave herself up to unrestrained grief; for the more she thought over the account she had just heard, the less likely did it appear to her that her errant sister would be reclaimed.

The misery Violet endured that night cannot be described; and while carriage after carriage rolled away from the Castle of Glenrora, little did the gay revellers think of the appalling catastrophe which had just befallen their hospitable entertainer! Little did they think that, at the very time they were leaving his princely mansion, he was exposed to the inclement weather, and the falling night dews, in pursuit of a fugitive daughter—and that daughter the joy of his heart and the light of his eyes! Little did they know that the other fair daughter was sitting in solitude, mourning over her ruined, lost sister—the playmate of her youth, and the companion of her riper years! But so it was, and time alone would unfold it to the astonishment, and indignation, and scorn of all who knew them.

In a few days Mr. Macdougal returned—a weary, desolate, heart-broken man; for, notwithstanding all his exertions, he returned *alone!* On arriving at Greenock, he found that a yacht, with two persons on board, answering to the description of Rose and the Marquis, had sailed some hours before. Her father lost no time in securing a small steamer, in which he pursued the fugitives out to sea; but finding no trace of them, and being in absolute ignorance of the course the yacht would steer, he was compelled, reluctantly, to give up the pursuit.

CHAPTER X.

LONDON.

We must now leave Glenrora, to follow the fortunes of our young friend, Sir Ronald, on his first start in life. A few days after we saw him on a visit to the place of his birth, we find him, still accompanied by the faithful M'Nab, starting by train to London, *en route* to Portsmouth, to join his regiment, then lying at that town in readiness to embark for the East. Clouds had been for some time gathering over the political horizon, and though the storm had not yet burst, still the roll of distant thunder might be heard, the neighing of the horses as they hastened to the battle, and the clash of military preparations, as some of the most powerful nations in Europe made ready to plunge into the bloody contest.

Oh, when will "men beat their swords into ploughshares, and learn the art of war no more?"

Before leaving his country for a space of years, Sir Ronald was anxious to see as much as possible of London —its great metropolis. And, for this purpose, determined to spend a few weeks in the mighty city, the pulsations of whose throbbing heart may be felt at the ends of the world! During his short residence in town, Sir Ronald, under the guidance of his hoary-headed friend, saw almost everything worthy of being seen—parks, palaces, statues, squares, streets, public buildings, bridges, and cathedrals. He saw many things to instruct and amuse—museums, exhibitions, scientific collections, botanical

gardens, and rare marbles disentombed from the graves of ancient cities; he saw many things also, to warn and avoid—the Monument and Waterloo Bridge, from which so many unfortunates, who had entered life's career as hopeful and as happy as he was now, but who, falling into the many pitfalls by which they were surrounded, and speedily running their brief course of misery, had rushed, unbidden, into the presence of an angry God. Yes, there was much to warn, and much, also, to avoid. There were saloons with singing and dancing—there were low theatres, where every scene which could inflame the lowest and most sensual appetites and passions of man was produced; and in their immediate neighbourhood, and, indeed, in almost every neighbourhood, were great glaring gin-palaces, decked out in meretricious display, and flinging streams of bright, warm light across the streets and lanes, and alleys, where they were situated. How sad, that vice should thus be allowed to parade her dens of iniquity in this our Christian country!

Among these gin-palaces was one belonging to the son of an old acquaintance of M'Nab's, who had, many years ago, left Scotland and proceeded to London, where he commenced business as the keeper of a small beer-shop, which, long before the time of which we now write, had been metamorphosed into one of these magnificent palaces in the neighbourhood of Drury-lane; and Mr. M'Nab, anxious to show Sir Ronald some of the evils of the drinking system where it was carried out on an extensive scale, renewed his acquaintance with "Jack Rogers," or Mr. Rogers as he must now be called, for from very small beginnings he had amassed considerable wealth, and occupied quite a respectable position in society. Mr. Rogers was looked upon as a prudent, careful, well-to-do-man; and as his wife and children were always well kept and well dressed—his debts regularly and honourably paid; as he was always ready to give a friend a lift, and as he, regularly as the year came round, sent handsome and substantial presents to his aged parents and sisters in Scotland, he was thought by the circle in

which he moved to be quite a pattern, and by his relations in Scotland a most dutiful son and brother. We must not forget to mention that Mr. Rogers was an elder in one of the Christian churches of the metropolis, and was as remarkable in the performance of his duties in that department as in others. Every Sunday found him in his pew, fat, sleek, and comfortable, surrounded by his family; and every Thursday evening found either him or his wife in his or her place at the prayer-meeting. Yes, Mr. Rogers was a respectable, kind, money-making, good, *Christian* man; and though his trade was selling gin, and brandy, and whisky, and all sorts of strong drinks to poor, wretched, starving beings, who would barter their last farthing,—nay, even their very souls—for one glass of prime old gin, yet, gainsay it who might, Mr. Rogers was a respectable man! Well, Mr. M'Nab renewed his acquaintance with this worthy, and was, as you may imagine, most warmly welcomed; and when young Sir Ronald was introduced to him as the son and only descendant of the old lairds of Glenrora, his enthusiasm knew no bounds. 'Was there anything he could do to serve his honour? Wud they no step up to the hoose an' see his gudewife, an' get a cup o' tea.' And when all these kind offers were declined—politely and courteously, but still declined—Mr. Rogers did not know what he could possibly do to show his respect for them. "At any rate," he said, "ye maun tak' a glass o' brandy for the days o' auld lang syne." And he proceeded to procure glasses.

"Pray," said Sir Ronald, "don't trouble yourself on our account."

"Nae trouble at all, ye're honour," said Rogers, still proceeding with his preparations; "I am but owre pr'ude to serve your father's son."

"At the risk of appearin' stickin," interposed M'Nab, "I must beg you will get nothing for Sir Ronald or me; neither of us drink anything but water."

"Water!" exclaimed Rogers. "Well, that beats a'. 'Am thinkin' it maun be a gae cald drink in this

weather; but hoot awa,' that's clean havers, you'll joost tak' a tastin' o' some ra'al gude stuff I hae"—and seeing M'Nab shake his head, he continued—"Losh, man, ye're awfu' stickin; ye're surely no doon richt teetotallers?"

"I suppose we're just as bad," said M'Nab, laughing; but, seeing the look of disappointment on Rogers' face at his well-meant offers being refused, he added, "but I'll tell you what will confer a great favour on my friend and me."

Mr. Rogers' face brightened. Anything in his power he would be too happy to grant!

"It is simply this," said M'Nab. "I wish my young friend here to see as many phases of life as possible, during his stay in this city; and we would both esteem it a great favour if you would allow us to sit for a couple of hours any evening—say to-morrow—in this magnificent palace of yours."

Mr. Rogers coughed and paused; but seeing M'Nab's eye fixed upon him, waiting for an answer, he at last said, "Weel, I wud hae nae objection, but to-morrow nicht is no' the most convenient for me. It's our prayer-meeting nicht, an' I like to attend thae meetin's regular like—for the sake o' the example, ye see, tho' it shud be naething else."

"Oh, we should be sorry, Mr. Rogers, to keep you from the prayer-meeting, but your presence would not at all be necessary. We'll give you our word of honour that we'll conduct ourselves with great propriety," replied Mr. M'Nab, smiling.

"Oh, I am no feared for that," said Rogers, "but as ye are teetotallers like, ye may see some things that 'll no a'thegether meet yer' views, an' ye may gang an' make a wark about them, an' get them into print (fouks print sic stuff noo a days), an' ye may do me an' ma trade a po'er o' mischief; an' ye see, I hae a big family, an' its a' I hae to depend upon in the world; but I can tell ye, gentlemen, there's mony war* trades in this muckle city than mine, for a' that."

* "Worse."

M'Nab assured him they would take no advantage of anything they would see, and with this assurance Rogers was fain to rest contented, and so he said, "Weel, gentlemen, for auld acquaintance sake, an' for the sake o' bonny Scotland, I'll agree to your request, but mind ye, I wud na' hae done it to ony ither men leevin'. So ye may baith come an' wait as lang as ye like; but mind yer'e not to be thinkin' ill o' me gin ye see some gae rough customers come about the place."

M'Nab and Sir Ronald, after thanking him for the permission, and, after some conversation about his friends in Scotland, took their departure.

On the following evening they returned, and on their entrance were politely requested to walk inside the counter, where, in a corner from which they could see without being much seen, they found chairs provided for them, with copies of the daily papers. "Mr. Rogers had gone to the meeting," the young man said, "but he had left orders that the gentlemen should be made as comfortable as possible, and have anything they might ask for."

Sir Ronald and M'Nab took the seats allotted to them, and each lifted a paper and commenced looking over it; but their attention was soon occupied with what was passing outside the counter.

During the day, the attendants in the palace were never idle, but when darkness set in, their customers increased ten-fold, and the swinging doors were scarcely allowed to remain shut for one moment. Old, young, and middle-aged poured in, and, draining off the measure demanded, retired as they entered, ever making way for new comers. And, as we have said, these votaries at the shrine of Bacchus were of all ages, so they were also of both sexes. Here the brutal debauched husband—there the wretched, half-clad wife, with a sickly dying infant wrapped in the tattered fragment of a shawl, down whose little throat, not unfrequently, was poured part of the cursed gin, which was ruining its miserable mother. Now it would be an old man—old at least for a drunkard, who seldom lives half his days—tottering in, and with an

oath demanding prime old Tom, as he flung down his coppers on the counter; and then a lad of sixteen or seventeen would follow, walking fast in the ways of the transgressor. But though the frequenters of this gin-shop differed in age and in sex, they all resembled each other in their look of extreme wretchedness, in their blood-shot eyes, in their hot, red lips, in their hideous and blotched features, and in their tattered and torn garments.

It was a heart-sickening sight, and our friends, who were looking on, were well nigh disgusted with the exhibition of so much misery which they could not relieve, and were thinking of quitting this haunt of wretchedness, when their attention was once more arrested by the entrance of a child about seven or eight years of age, perhaps more; for though her figure and size might pronounce her to be about that age, yet, her poor thin face and pinched emaciated features, wore a much older expression. A short torn petticoat, scarce reaching her knees, was all her clothing, if we except an old torn shawl which was wrapped around her head, and from beneath which a few elf-like locks escaped and fell upon her face, which was blue with cold and besmeared with dirt. She produced an old cracked tea-cup from the folds of her little shawl, and asked for some gin, for which she tendered a few coppers in payment. The man, lifting the money, said, "Short a penny; come on, fork out."

"I have no more, sir," said the child, in a deprecating voice; "oh! please, sir, let me have it."

"Can't," said the man, lifting the tea-cup to return the spirits.

"Oh! sir," said the child, "I must have it; mother will thrash me so, if I go back without it. Do let me have a little, sir."

The man poured part of it back, giving her the rest, saying gruffly, "Come, now, begone, and don't play that trick again, you little hussy!"

As she left the shop, Sir Ronald, whose sympathy had been greatly excited by the wretched little creature, rose,

and whispering to M'Nab "that he would return in a few minutes," followed her to the door. On leaving the shop he found the child standing, holding the broken tea-cup to her nose, evidently enjoying the smell of the contents.

"My poor child," said Sir Ronald, laying his hand kindly on her shoulder, "you look starving. Are you hungry?"

"Yes, sir," replied the child, "*very*; I have had no food to-day."

"No food to-day; is that true?"

"Yes, sir; but that's not much. I am often days without food."

"Poor child," said Sir Ronald, "come with me, and I will get you some."

But the child lingered at the door of the gin-shop, and when asked once more to come on, she said, "Oh, sir, would you not give me a tastin', just a tastin' of gin?"

"Not a *drop*," said Sir Ronald firmly; but in a gentler tone he continued, "You are young, poor child; surely you cannot have learned already to like gin?"

"I have seldom tasted it, sir; but mother says it does her more good than all the meat in the world, and often when I am hungry, sir, the smell warms me."

"Do you never drink any of what you get for your mother?" asked Sir Ronald.

"Never, sir, she would thrash me awful if I did."

"What does your mother do?" asked Sir Ronald.

"Nothin', sir; she's all'urs sick, an' in bed now.

"Is your father alive?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what does he do?"

"Any job he can pick up on the street. Sometimes he gets one, an' sometimes not; but w'en he does, he brings home a little money, an' we all get some'at to eat—that's to say, when he does not spend it all in drink."

"And when he's drunk, does he beat you?"

"All'urs, sir; an' he kicks me, too, when he gets me;

but I all'urs run an' 'ide somew'ere w'en I 'ear 'im a comin'."

"And your mother—does she hide too?"

"Oh! no, sir; she's not able; an' he drags 'er about, an' thrashes 'er so, that I'm sure he will kill 'er some day. Mother thinks so, too, an' says she'll be very glad w'en that time comes."

By this time they had reached a sort of provision shop, and Sir Ronald, entering, procured a quantity of bread and meat, which he gave to the poor child. No sooner had she received them than—raising her eyes, filled with a look of unutterable gratitude, to Sir Ronald's handsome face—she commenced devouring it with fearful voracity. While she was doing so, our young soldier, who was enjoying the pleasure of doing good, cast his eye upon a pawn shop, and, anxious to procure some article of clothing for the shivering creature, he took her in and purchased a calico gown, little the worse of the wear, which he caused her to put on. While she was doing so, he noticed that her poor shoulders and skinny arms were covered with black and blue bruises, and that, in some places, the skin was actually cut with some blunt instrument. Asking the cause of these marks, he was told 'that it was only father with the poker, but that they were not sore now.' On putting on the gown the child said,

"It is very kind of you, sir, but it will be no good—mother won't let me keep it."

"Why not?" asked Sir Ronald.

"'Cause she will want the money to drink, sir, an' she will make me pawn it."

"Oh, perhaps not," said Sir Ronald, in a kind tone.

"But *I am sure*, sir," said the child. "T'other day she sent me to beg, an' a lady gave me a thick warm petticoat, sir, an' she made me take it off an' pawn it. That man can tell you that it's quite true, sir, for he gave me the money."

"Is that the case?" said Sir Ronald to the man from whom he had purchased the gown.

"It is perfectly true, sir," replied the man.

"I wonder," said Sir Ronald to him, with some asperity, "I wonder you could do such a thing!"

"It is our trade, sir," replied the man, with indifference, "and it *pays*."

"A strange world this seems to be," said Sir Ronald, indignantly. "One man sells intoxicating drink to wretched starving creatures, and another takes a warm petticoat from a naked, shivering child, and both do it for no other reason than because it *pays!*"

"Oh, sir," said the man, "*you* know nothing about it: we must live!"

"*Live!*" exclaimed Sir Ronald, "I would rather pitch myself into the sea, than I would live by such means," and turning, he left the shop, the child following. When they reached the street he said to the child, "Now go home, like a good girl, and, perhaps, I will see to-morrow and get something done for you; but first, tell me why your father beat you with the poker?"

"For taking drink to mother, sir."

"Then why do you do so?"

"'Cause mother thrashes me when I don't, sir, an' I can hide from father, but not from mother, sir."

"Poor child, you must be very unhappy!"

The creature looked at him with an expression of wonder; she did not understand happiness—she had never known it, and therefore could not know what its antithesis meant. She went home as Sir Ronald had desired her, in full consciousness of what awaited her there, and he rejoined M'Nab in the gin-palace.

The traffic seemed now at its height, but there was no difference in the appearance of the customers. Still the same crowds with the same haggard faces, with the same blood-shot eyes, with the same red lips, from which were constantly proceeding foul and blasphemous language, ribald jokes, and profane oaths. Not more than half-an-hour had passed when Sir Ronald was mortified to see his little *protegé* once more enter the shop, and provoked beyond measure to see that she was in the very same

wretched attire which she had worn on her first entrance. The calico frock was undoubtedly pawned, for this time she seemed flush of money, as she tabled a shilling for gin, and instead of a cracked tea-cup, she produced an old blacking-bottle to receive the liquor.

Sir Ronald's indignation was uncontrollable, and exclaiming, "Is it possible?" he started from his chair, when M'Nab, laying his hand on his arm, detained him a few minutes. Sir Ronald, in a whisper, begged him 'to come away, as he could stand this no longer.' M'Nab immediately rose, and bidding the man who had given them seats say to his master that 'they were obliged to him for the accommodation they had received,' followed Sir Ronald to the door. On emerging from the gin-palace they both seemed to breathe more freely. The sights they had seen had sickened their hearts, and the fumes of the strong liquors around them had made their heads to ache.

"Thank God," said Sir Ronald, "we are done with this! I don't think I ever spent a more miserable evening in my life, and I trust I never shall spend such another."

"It won't be necessary, my boy, we have both witnessed scenes to-night which we would never have believed, had we not seen them with our own eyes."

"And I have heard such a heart-rending story from that poor child that I went out after," said Sir Ronald, "that my heart bleeds yet." After relating to M'Nab the details of her story, he continued, "Did ever you hear anything so shocking? It is no use, you see, giving her anything—food, clothes, or money, for her wretched parents pawn everything she receives to procure drink!"

"It is too true, my boy; when the demon of intoxication once takes possession of a man, there is nothing too good, too pure, too gentle, too loving, to be withheld from its shrine. Principle, good conscience, aged parents, loving wife, tender, helpless infants—all—all are immolated on his smoking altar; yes, 'neath the car of this Juggernaut are destroyed yearly tens of thou-

sands of victims! When will the Christian men and women of this country arise and come to the help of the Lord against the mighty!"

"There is one thing I cannot understand," said Sir Ronald, "and that is, why such men as Rogers, and others following the same trade, are admitted into Christian churches, and are looked upon by the world at large as respectable men; in my opinion I think them far more base than their poor degraded victims!"

"I am inclined to think as you do, my boy," replied M'Nab, "and to feel that so long as the Church of our country flings a shield over those engaged in this abominable traffic—so long as she admits them to her ordinances—so long as she renders them, in the eyes of the Christian world, *respectable* men—so long will this cursed trade go on and prosper; but let the Church awake—let her put these men under her ban—let her exclude them from her membership, and then, men who have any wish to bear a respectable name, will shrink from engaging in a trade which is thus stamped with disgrace. This is my candid opinion, but I may be wrong, and my views may be too extreme," added M'Nab. "One thing, however, is plain—that the evil is gigantic, and that very strong and decided measures are required for its subversion!"

"I had no idea, M'Nab," said Sir Ronald, "of the extent to which drinking is carried on, and the wretchedness resulting from it, till to-night."

"And yet," said M'Nab, "you have seen but little of it. There are hundreds of those gin-palaces in London, where the same scenes of debauchery are enacted night after night."

"The thought is overwhelming," said Sir Ronald.

"It is, my boy. Would that the nation was roused to a sense of the evil—an evil which is daily and hourly undermining the basis of society, and which is annually sweeping its thousands to the grave!"

"I can't understand," said Sir Ronald, "how people come to have such a craving for strong drink.'

It is astonishing," said M'Nab, "for no one is born with the love of it; and yet not astonishing either, for the habit is acquired, just as any other habit, by degrees. *No one becomes a drunkard at once*, and, what is still more remarkable, drunkards are made in respectable circles, not amid the offscourings we have seen to-night. Nine-tenths of those poor wretches have seen better days."

"It is dreadful," said Sir Ronald; "and were my poor father's fate not sufficient to deter me from the intoxicating cup, the fearful scene I have witnessed to-night would be ever before me to warn me from the drunkard's destiny."

"God grant it may, my boy; and ever in the hour of temptation remember where your great strength lies, and look upward!—upward!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE MESS.

A SHORT time after the events narrated in our last chapter, Sir Ronald proceeded to Portsmouth, and there he parted with old M'Nab, who had hitherto, like a faithful mentor, ever watched over him. Before parting, the old man drew from his pocket a small Bible—not new, but which had the appearance of being most carefully preserved; and, placing it in the hand of his young friend, he said,

"It was your mother's, my boy. I've kept it for you to this day. Promise me, ere we part—in all likelihood for ever—that you will read a small portion of it daily; and that, in all cases of difficulty, you will take it for your guide and your chart, and then no real harm will ever befall you. You will promise old M'Nab this—will you not?"

"I will promise," said Sir Ronald, as, with tears in his eyes, he wrung the hand of his faithful friend.

"And you'll never forget Loch Rora?" added M'Nab, in a lower voice.

"While I live—never!" replied the young man.

"God bless you!—farewell, farewell, my boy!" And M'Nab, once more wringing the hand of the orphan lad, flung himself into the railway carriage—the whistle sounded, and Sir Ronald was alone in the world.

The regiment to which our young hero had been gazetted was one of the most distinguished in the service, and had seen much active service. During "the piping times of peace" it had been stationed in the East Indies, and there had, in repeated encounters with our partially subdued dependencies, kept its arm in practice, and its

steel from rusting. It was, for the most part, officered by veteran soldiers, inured to the hardships of military life—men who had, from their earliest days, been accustomed to all the mysteries of camp and field, and who were once more, after a very brief sojourn in their native land, preparing to sail for a new scene of warfare, to meet in stern encounter a new and powerful foe. But while the majority ef the officers were men such as we have described, there were a few of a very different description—young men who had filled up the vacancies created on the return of the regiment by the promotion of some and the retirement of others from active service—and whose only knowledge of soldiers' life was confined to parades in the park, periodical changes of quarters from one garrison town to another, county balls, sumptuous banquets, wild freaks, and heartless flirtations. But all this was now to be changed. Instead of parade and pomp, were to come long marches through an enemy's country; instead of silken curtained halls of pleasure and luxurious feasts, were to come camps and bivouacs, salt pork and dry biscuits, nights of cold and weariness and watching 'mid Crimean snows, with no protection from the frosty sky but a few dripping branches of brushwood; or the still more harrassing duty, 'mid mud and clay, in the fatal trench. Yes, a change was coming; and the marvel was, not that so many, but that so few of these butterfly sons of fashion quitted the post of danger, and resigned their commissions during that long winter before the Russian fortress.

After parting with his venerable protector, Macdonald reported himself, in due form, to the officer commanding his regiment, and was welcomed most cordially by him. Indeed, it was seldom that Colonel Munro had the pleasure of welcoming such a fine specimen of a young man to his regiment; and his eye lighted up as it fell on Sir Ronald's noble and manly figure, and his open handsome face. After the old soldier had shaken hands with him, and gazed, for an instant, on him in silence, he said,

"You're just the stuff a soldier should be made of, my

lad. I wish we had a few more of the same stamp; for I suspect we'll have rough work before us, some of these days. I fear I must tell you that you have a chance of some hard blows soon."

Sir Ronald bowed—"There is nothing I desire more, except the chance of giving some."

The Colonel smiled and said, "Oh! I'll make you sure of that chance; and pretty sure am I you'll make a good use of it."

Sir Ronald then took his leave, the Colonel once more shaking hands with him, as he retired; and muttering to himself as he walked up to a table covered with papers, "Brave lad that, or I am much mistaken. None of your scape-graces, breaking lamps, and getting one into eternal rows with policemen! Wish, from my heart, I had another half-dozen like him!"

That evening Macdonald made his *début* at mess, where he met, for the first time, all his brother officers, by whom he was also most cordially welcomed. Indeed, this, his first day with his regiment, would have been perfectly delightful, but for a little incident which occurred at table, and which, trifling though it was, made him one or two mortal enemies. As you may well suppose, Sir Ronald did not drink wine, porter, or beer, during dinner; and as this was something new in the regiment, at least among the officers, it could scarcely fail to escape observation. After he had passed the decanter once or twice, quietly and unostentatiously, but always without taking any wine, a Captain Vaughan, who sat next him, said, "You're taking no wine, Sir Ronald; are you not well?"

"Never better in my life," replied Sir Ronald, "but I never drink wine."

"Never drink wine!" repeated Vaughan, in a tone of amazement. "You astonish me. Oh! but I forgot, you are a Scotchman; most Scotchmen prefer whisky."

"But that is not my case," said Sir Ronald. "I have no preference except for pure water."

"I see you have some things to learn," said Vaughan,

good humouredly; "but I'm sure you will prove an apt pupil, and I shall have much pleasure in teaching you. Come, now, we'll make a beginning. A glass of wine with you, Sir Ronald." And lifting the decanter he replenished his glass, and then pushing it to Sir Ronald, waited for him to do the same.

Will the reader despise our young friend if we confess that for one instant he hesitated? Yes, notwithstanding all he had heard, and all he had seen to warn him against the drinking customs of society, he hesitated! Captain Vaughan looked so kindly at him, and spoke in such a good humoured tone, as he said once more, "Come, you won't refuse me the pleasure of a glass of wine with you on this our first acquaintance?" that it seemed most ungracious in him to refuse; and, 'after all, it is but a trifle,' thought Sir Ronald; 'just a paltry glass of wine—I need never take another; yes, I can't be so disobliging,' and he stretched out his hand to the bottle, and, lifting it, he was proceeding to fill his glass, when, suddenly, he placed the bottle once more on the table, withdrawing his hand as if it had been bit by an adder, and turning round to Captain Vaughan, he said, "You must excuse me, sir; test my desire to oblige you by anything else in the world, but drink wine I cannot!"

Captain Vaughan looked hurt, as he said, "You must be the best judge of your own feelings, Sir Ronald. I have no desire to make you take wine or do anything else against your will. As for testing your desire to oblige me, I think there is little use in that."

"Are you going to keep the sherry there all night?" called out a young officer named Brown, who was seated near the middle of the table.

"I beg your pardon, Brown," said Vaughan, as he passed the decanter, "I have only been trying to persuade our new friend, Sir Ronald here, to take a glass of wine, but I am sorry to say without success."

"Tar and feather him, then," said Brown.

Sir Ronald felt the blood crimson his forehead, but he made no reply.

"What the dooce is all this row about," said a young gentleman named Varney, with an affected drawl. "You don't mean to say that our new officer 's a muff?"

"I don't know, but he's something twice as bad," said Brown, in an audible whisper, "he's a water-drinker. I don't know what things are to come to when our mess is to be spoilt by the presence of such a bore."

"The dooce he is," said Varney, "I'll sell out to-morrow. Confound him! to come among such a set of jolly fellows, too;" and, addressing an officer who was sitting next to Sir Ronald, he added, "Will you do me the favour, Gordon, of asking that newly-fledged bird beside you, if his mother knows he's out?"

"I'll do nothing of the kind, Varney," said Captain Gordon, "you may deliver your impertinent messages yourself, or, better still, *keep them to yourself.*" And turning to Sir Ronald, whose blood was boiling, he added kindly, "Pay no attention to him; he's a fool; and though I'm no water-drinker myself, I've only to say, be staunch to your colours, and you will soon gain the respect of us all."

Sir Ronald thanked him for his good advice, and added, "That nothing ever cost him more pain than refusing that one glass of wine."

"I can perfectly understand that," said Captain Gordon, "but I have no doubt you have come to your decision on good grounds; so never mind what fools and fops say about it. A man's not worth a straw who cannot hold an opinion of his own!"

From that moment, Sir Ronald and Captain Gordon became sworn friends. Our young hero had made two or three mortal enemies, but he had gained the friendship of a true, honourable, and brave man; and such a friendship more than compensated for the silly, unreasonable hostility of a few empty-pated fops!

And Captain Gordon's words were soon verified, for during the few weeks that his regiment remained in England, Sir Ronald, by his good conduct, his regular and soldierlike discharge of his duties, and his readiness

to oblige both officers and men, *did* gain the respect of all whose opinion was worth having. It is true that Brown, Varney, and one or two others, did not cease to annoy him whenever they possibly could, and to play off upon him occasionally a few practical jokes—such as ordering to his quarters, on several different occasions, dozens of champagne, and large quantities of brandy and gin, addressed to the "hardest drinker in the regiment;" but these jokes being so exceedingly harmless, and Sir Ronald having the presence of mind to pay very little attention to them, his persecutors soon wearied, and gave them up.

CHAPTER XII.

CHANGES.

MEANWHILE, Time speeds on his way—imperceptibly, but slowly, surely, steadily. Time, the great wizard, whose magic wand transforms the child into the man, the playful girl into the blushing maiden, and the busy, active man of the world into the helpless dotard of three-score years and ten!—Time, which digs our grave ere it has well prepared our cradle, and whose sharp, clear scythe is ever engaged in cutting down the brightest, the best, and the fairest of our earthly hopes!—Time, which is nevertheless the great consoler of the afflicted, the healer of the torn heart, the repairer of breaches—Time, which can do all but restore the loved one and re-fill the empty chair—Time speeds on its way!

Nearly a year had passed since the unhappy flight of Rose had plunged her family into misery, and though time had somewhat blunted their sorrow, yet a gloom like that of the shadow of death hung over the great, grand Castle of Glenrora. A stranger visiting it would have been struck by its air of gloomy misery, its large, magnificent, untenanted rooms, its long corridors, its pictured halls, in which scarce a footfall was now heard. The family was reduced to three individuals—Mr. and Mrs. Macdougal and their daughter, our poor Violet. Their eldest son, Albert, had joined the Guards, and was on his way to the Crimea; and their youngest was still at school.

Mr. Macdougal was a different man now from what he had been. The easy, frank, kind manner of the good country gentleman was quite gone, and he was instead

passionate, impetuous, tyrannical, and impatient of anything approaching to contradiction. His first great trial had completely soured him, and having no higher source of comfort than this world affords, he had become a broken-spirited, dejected man. Brandy and water had hitherto been necessary to him, but now it was part of his very existence, as he seemed to live, breathe, and move only for the sake of that mixture. His wife and he spent the greater part of their time in mutual recriminations, the one blaming the other for what both had done their utmost to encourage—the intimacy of Rose with the Marquis, and the result which followed. This, however, was sometimes varied by the supposed speeches he would make to his poor daughter, should she ever have the audacity to return to the paternal roof, and by the upbraidings which he vowed he would bestow upon her, as, in the sight of the domestics, he would turn her from the home she had dishonoured, and from the parents she had disgraced! Would he have done so? It is possible; but he never had the chance! And yet the chance seemed daily and hourly becoming more likely; for they had learned from the newspapers that the Marquis of Reston had joined his regiment, and had sailed with the last detachment to the seat of war. This being the case, it seemed as if Rose had no alternative but to return home, and, like the prodigal, beg such mercy as a father would bestow.

But, perhaps, the greatest change had passed upon Violet. The poor girl had felt her sister's loss far more deeply than either her father or mother. And she suffered from it all the more that, from its very nature, she could not speak of it—no, not even to her chosen friend, Mrs. Graham, had the name of Rose ever fallen from her lips. When they met (which was seldom now, for Violet rarely went to the Manse, because it seemed to her selfish to fling a shadow of sorrow over the happiness of those friends whom she knew sympathised so deeply with her) Mrs. Graham would press her thin hand and gaze tearfully on her careworn countenance; for grief

had, indeed, made sad havoc with her fair face. The roundness of her young cheek was gone; the fresh hue of health had fled; her beautiful regular features were thin and pinched; her once red lips were colourless, while her large soft eyes were surrounded with deep, dark circles, which gave a weird, unearthly look to her countenance. To the old and middle-aged grief is sometimes even becoming, but when it sets its gloomy signet on the young, the bright, and the beautiful, we cannot help feeling that surely it has mistaken its victim, and that it is unnatural for bright youth to be aught but happy.

The great change which had passed on Violet did not give her parents much uneasiness, as Mr. Macdougal had what appeared to him a most satisfactory explanation of it; for, notwithstanding all he could say to the contrary, Violet had become a water drinker—a determined, conscientious, consistent water drinker! And this not in consequence of any pressure applied from without, but simply as the result of her own judgment. Not that she had ever cared much for wine, but she had been in the habit of using it daily, and she feared above all things that it might become as necessary to her existence as it seemed to have done to that of Rose and her parents. Moreover, she could not divest herself of the feeling that, but for her poor sister's love of stimulants, she never could have fallen so low. And Violet found that she had not begun a moment too soon, and was astonished that she missed her daily quantity of wine very much. The roast mutton or the broiled chicken seemed to stick in her throat without the usual glass of sherry to wash it down, and the finest fruit in the world wanted zest without a glass of good old port. Violet, of course, kept this mortifying discovery to herself; but it made her none the less determined to persevere in her newly-formed resolution. Nor was her perseverance in what she considered the path of duty long unrewarded; for a few months had not passed ere she had gained a complete victory over a habit which had almost become a second nature, and ere she could not only take with

comfort, but had even an absolute enjoyment in a draught of pure water, the best and safest beverage in the world! This victory over herself was the only source of happiness she enjoyed during the long and dreary years which succeeded the loss of Rose, and during the weary months which seemed to pass so slowly, as day by day, night by night, hoping against hope, she watched for her deluded sister's return. And how differently would she have treated the poor outcast from what her father threatened to do! From the time the newspapers announced the departure of the Marquis to the East, the probability of her sister's return seemed, in Violet's eyes, to be greatly increased, and she often walked long distances from the Castle in the hope of meeting this poor wandering sheep on her return to the paternal fold—in the hope of embracing her, oh! how tenderly! in the hope of leading her homeward, oh! how gently! with looks and words of love and welcome; and in the hope, nay, in the absolute certainty, of securing her father's pardon for the returning penitent. And then returning from her long unsuccessful walks, wearied in body, and dejected in spirit, and with that sickness of heart which is always caused by hope deferred, the remainder of the night would be spent in solitude and sighing, and in forming new plans and in cherishing new hopes for the morrow. The object, which so engrossed her waking thoughts not unfrequently gave a colour to her sleeping visions. Sometimes these dreams were of a pleasing nature, and she would fancy she was playing with Rose, as in the sweet days of infancy, wandering with her, arm in arm, among the glorious mountains, gathering the purple heather, or in shady glen cutting the dog rose and daisy, and then in childish glee, sitting 'neath the spreading branches of a gigantic oak, and crowning themselves with flowery wreaths, and fancying themselves attendants on the good fairy queen, while the woods would resound with their songs, their shouts, and their laughter. And when, in the midst of such a delightful vision, Violet would suddenly awake, she would shut her eyes, and strive to

sleep again, that she might recall their dreamy happiness, knowing, though she did, that it was but the remembrance of a joy that had for ever faded away! But Violet's dreams, alas! were seldom of this pleasing nature, far more generally they were of a sad and gloomy cast, and sometimes so horrible, that for nights she would dread to seek her solitary couch. In the darkness of night her spirit would be carried to a foreign land, and there she would see the once brilliant Rose laid on a miserable couch, in dirt, in destitution, and alone; her face flushed with fever, her eyes rolling, her lips parched and burning, and, with the strange knowledge that dreams give, Violet would know that her sister was dying: she would hear the wild ravings—the cry for cold water, and, in her anxiety to help, she would approach the sufferer with a cup of the desired draught, who, suddenly lifting her arms with wild blasphemous exclamations, would dash the contents into Violet's face, crying, "It burns! it burns! it is brandy!" and with a shudder, and the cry still ringing in her ears, Violet would awake, and start from her couch with a cry of horror. Or at other times she would see her beloved sister—in raiment torn and tattered—her long hair hanging around her matted and dishevelled—her feet bare, scratched, and bleeding—carrying a wailing infant on her weary breast. Violet would see her approaching the proud gates of her childhood's home, and she would hear her in broken words implore shelter in some hidden corner of that noble pile; she would hear her ask for a servant's lowly place, that she might keep herself and her wretched babe from starvation, and she would see her sinful father, in his pride, drive off his penitent daughter from the door; and then Violet would rush to that poor waif and would fling her arms around her, and Rose would clutch her with a deadly grasp, and she would feel herself sinking down, down, in that leaden embrace—till, with a struggle, she would awake, and thank God that it was *but* a dream! But what need of dwelling longer on the many sad

sights and horrid visions which harrassed the sleeping hours of poor Violet, and made her periods of rest even more intolerable than her days of anguish? Sad, is it not, to think that the innocent in this world often seem to suffer more than the guilty! and though severe retribution in the end awaits the criminal, still in the first instance the sorrow, the suffering, the misery, and the anguish is laid upon the lamb, meek and gentle—the loving sister spending her days and nights mourning over her sinning and lost companion; the tender wife, watching with eager ear for the stuttering step of her debauched husband, and grieving over the wreck of her former joys; or the venerable sire wailing over the untimely death of his dissipated son, and exclaiming, "My son, my son! would to God I had died for thee!"

Besides her grief for the ruin of Rose, Violet had another and a newer source of sorrow, in the habitual and confirmed habits of intoxication of both her parents. Scarcely a night now passed but the poor girl had to assist one, or, more frequently, both of them, to their room; and this task she imposed upon herself as a sacred duty, for she would not, for the world, have allowed the servants to discover to what a state of helplessness and stupidity her foolish parents allowed themselves to be reduced.

Under this new trial Violet also suffered much; indeed, she felt as if she must sink under it; but in her distress, she cried unto One, "whose ear is ever open," and "whose arm is never shortened." He heard her cry, and sent sustaining grace, and Violet got strength for the discharge of all her duties, and, in the absence of human sympathy, she found, in the solitude of her chamber, a higher and holier sympathy in that "friend who sticketh closer than a brother." In the performance of those duties thus laid upon her, Violet was roused from her morbid grief for Rose; she was enabled to cast all her care on One whom she knew cared for her, and to commit into His hands the interests of all whom she loved, feeling assured that the "Judge of all the earth

would do right." And from this fiery furnace Violet came out a purer, a holier, a nobler woman, and when all hope of the return of her sister was extinguished, peace came at last, a holy peace, which the world knows not. And a holy calm resting in her heart, filled her whole countenance with its serene expression. It gleamed in her soft eye; it irradiated her snowy brow; it lingered round her sweet mouth; it pervaded her every action; it hung, in words of Christian kindness, on her gentle tongue; it gave her patience to bear the captiousness and fretfulness of her wretched parents, and to try, by every gentle way, to woo them back to the paths of virtue. And though in this she was unsuccessful, still the heavenly peace remained unbroken in her heart; and though her cheek was still pale and her face thin, yet the expression we have described, which ever rested on it, more than compensated in its angelic sweetness, for the loss of other charms. And, as in the autumn evenings, the fair girl would sit watching the setting sun flushing, with more than earthly grandeur, the landscape, decked in dying beauty, and as a stray ray of rosy light would fall upon that marble brow, and as she would raise her large, soft eyes to Heaven, one would sometimes shudder to think that "passing away" was no less legibly written there than it was on dropping leaf and crimson foliage. At this time little did Violet imagine, when in her musings she felt herself alone in in this world, and longed to fly away and be at rest, that she was enshrined in the heart of a brave young soldier; that her sweet face was ever before him; that she was the pole-star of his existence, ever pointing to the path of virtue and true honour!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ALMA.

THE 20th of September, 1854, will not soon be forgotten in this country. On that day, the heights of Alma, though forming, from their nature, and the superior numbers of the enemy by whom they were held, one of the strongest positions in the world, were scaled, and nobly carried by men who, fighting with desperate valour, vindicated the character of the old Saxon race, and renewed the claim of being the descendants of those heroes who had gained their laurels on many a blood-dyed field. The incidents of that day, being still fresh in our memories, need not be here repeated; and as our narrative has to do only with the fortunes of one or two insignificant individuals, we shall be pardoned entering into the details of that great and glorious day when Europe saw, with wonder, brave men of two nations, hitherto engaged in deadliest strife, no longer rivals, but friends, shedding their blood in a common cause—the cause of right against might—the cause of the weak against the strong—the cause of civilization against northern despotism, wishing through the gate of Constantinople to precipitate its hordes on the sunny plains of the East, and thus retard for centuries the progress of the world!

On the morning, then, of this eventful day, we meet once more three of the characters who have already figured in these pages—the Marquis of Reston in the Cavalry, Ensign Albert Macdougal in the Guards, and our young friend, Sir Ronald Macdonald, in the Highlanders.

The Marquis, we are sorry to say, has not at all improved since we last met him in that case of seduction, in which he played so prominent a part. Ever craving after excitement, he rejoiced in spirit when the order came for all officers on leave to join their regiments, and hastened from the south of France, where he had been leading, with Rose, a life of voluptuous dissipation, to join a detachment of his regiment then on the eve of departure for the East. During the short time he had been already with his men, he had signalised himself by every wild scheme of debauchery it was possible to conceive; twice he had been brought under the notice of his commanding officer for unruly and riotous conduct while in a state of intoxication, and twice, being the son of a duke, had he escaped with a severe reprimand and a caution, for neither of which did our gallant Marquis care one straw.

Turning next to Albert, we find him a talking, strutting, swaggering young man; but, nevertheless, endowed with more than an ordinary share of courage. Had he only avoided the strong stimulants, the love of which he acquired when a mere child under his father's roof, and at his father's table; had he only been able, we say, to avoid the use of these stimulants, all might have been well with him; but as it was, all was going wrong. His love of stimulants led to a carelessness in the discharge of his duties—led to a readiness to plunge headlong into scrapes, without considering their possible results—led to waywardness and a tendency to insubordination; and paved the way, in short, for all and any amount of evil. It was melancholy to see a young man of such promise so far on the highway to ruin, and all in consequence of the training of his early years. At present one single desire seemed to fill Albert's whole heart, and to colour his every action, and this was to have an opportunity of meeting the Marquis of Reston, and wiping out his sister's dishonour in the heart blood of her destroyer.

And Sir Ronald!—with what pleasure we turn to

him, ever calm, serene, and staid amid the wild sights and sounds of a soldier's life. He was one, and, thank God, there were many others, of whom his country had cause to be proud. While we write of him, a host of noble names rises up before us—names of those who, while good soldiers of our Queen and country, were what is far better, good soldiers of the Cross, and followers of them who through "faith and patience inherit the promises." Yes, the time spent by Sir Ronald in the camp at Varna had been turned to good account; his mother's Bible, no doubt in answer to that mother's prayers, had truly proved "a light to his feet and a lamp to his path;" while the training he had received from good old M'Nab, and the promises made to him, kept him from many a scene which might otherwise have proved a snare to him. When the cholera raged at Varna, and he lived amid the dying and the dead, he was the means of doing much good to those who were ready to perish, and many a word of hope and comfort was read to the dying and the despairing from the holy pages of that mother's Bible. Nor did Sir Ronald ever make those labours of love an excuse for neglecting the duties of his profession. Punctual and soldierlike in all his actions, he had been repeatedly noticed and spoken kindly to by Colonel Munro, who liked him none the less that his own prediction of him had been verified. The Colonel had, moreover, done something more than spoken kindly to him—he had recommended him for promotion on the first vacancy. So much for Sir Ronald. But perhaps we should scarcely be dealing fairly with our reader did we not inform him of a little secret which, perhaps, he has already guessed, but which Sir Ronald thought locked in the recesses of his own bosom, and which gave colour and life to his every action. The secret is, that a fair young form of a gentle, loving woman, filled his noble and manly heart, holding a place second only to that of his Maker, in his honest affections. Round that fair young form every hope centred, and on her every desire

was fixed. The leading star of his life was Violet, Mr. Macdougal's beautiful daughter. Would he ever see her more?

On the morning of the 20th, notwithstanding the hurry and bustle created by the preparation for the attack, Sir Ronald found time to draw, from a small pocket in the breast of his coat, the constant companion of all his marches—his mother's Bible, and to read a few verses from its sacred pages; then, restoring it to its place, and committing himself into God's hands, he went to his post, his mind stayed in perfect peace, and fully prepared for whatever might be in store for him.

The scene was imposing beyond description, as our men in dense masses, and in their brilliant uniforms, the morning sun gleaming upon their bayonets, firm resolve pictured on every countenance, and every heart throbbing high with the determination to conquer or die, marched on to the deadly conflict.

At last, "clambering through the clustering grapes," a severe cannonade was opened upon them; shot and shell whistled round, while thick showers of grape darkened the air like hail. Comrades fell at their side; this was too much for British blood. The calm, stern composure with which the attack was commenced, gave place to fury. The Alma was crossed, notwithstanding the fierce fire of the enemy; post after post was assailed and carried at the point of the bayonet. The Russians, good soldiers though they were, retreated in dismay. "They were prepared," they said, "to fight with men, but not with devils!" The day was ours. How nobly our brave men fought, and how nobly they fell, is enshrined in the history of their grateful country.

And now the heat, the warfare, and the bloodshed of the day is o'er; our soldiers bivouac on the heights of Alma; the shouts of victory have ceased; but the groans of the wounded still fill the ear. Night looks down with her holy eye on the field of carnage and death—on a sight which angels might weep to look upon—on the wounded, the dying, and the dead; "on friend and foe in

one red burial blent!" Oh! men, made in the image of God! how long will ye destroy each other, and mar, with shot and shell, His glorious handiwork? How long must women wail over bright and noble heads laid low—over husband, son, and brother, who will return no more! Watchfires are gleaming on those bloody heights, and by their flickering light fatigue parties are bringing in, on stretchers, their wounded comrades. Their faces are livid, and their features are distorted by pain; but still they are recognised easily enough by those who know them, and who had seen them that morning in manhood's pride. By the side of a watchfire stood Sir Ronald, safe and unwounded, though all that day in the thickest of the fight, and while many who fought as bravely as he did fell thick around him, he had been preserved. He felt as if he was spared by a special miracle, and to others it seemed as if he possessed a charmed life. As he thus stood, a wounded officer was carried past, and the gleam of the fire fell upon his features.

Why does Sir Ronald start, and the pulsations of his heart seems to cease? The wounded man is a stranger to him. From his dress he is evidently a young officer of the Guards; but his features, distorted though they are, put Sir Ronald forcibly in mind of one who is very dear to him. He follows the mournful *cortége;* he ascertains his name. It is Ensign Macdougal. His heart is filled with grief. He thinks of the distress of his family. He thinks of the distress of her who is dearer to him than life; and he would, to have saved her suffering, joyfully taken her wounded brother's place. Sir Ronald returns to the place by the watch-fire; he puts his hand into his breast to pull out his Bible, intending to read by the light of the fire. But what is this? Wonder of wonders! A bullet has cut through the outer covering, the binding, and the leaves, and is firmly wedged between the clasped boards. An inch—nay, half-an-inch farther, and that bullet would have pierced his heart. His mother's Bible has saved his life!

The news of a great battle and of a glorious victory

reached this country. The mighty heart of the nation throbbed with joy; but the telegram which brought the news of the victory, brought also the report of our great loss in killed and wounded, and, from the Queen on her throne down to the humble peasant, one gush of emotion swelled every bosom—anguish for our fallen heroes, pity for their wounded comrades, and sympathy for the widows and fatherless. The official despatches came next, relating, in precise military phrase, the particulars of the attack, and giving detailed lists of the killed and wounded. And who can picture the eager, fearful anxiety which filled their breasts, as, with trembling hands, parents, wives, and sisters, tearing off the covers from the papers, turned at once to those bloody lists, and, with strained eyes, rapidly scanned the columns, dreading every instant to have their worst fears confirmed by seeing the name of some beloved friend.

Old M'Nab bought the *Times* that morning, walked home with it to his little parlour, where his boy, as he loved to call Sir Ronald, used to play around his knee, laid it down slowly on the table, approached the fire, stirred it once or twice, laying the poker very deliberately down each time; then, taking out his spectacles, he wiped the glasses most carefully with his silk handkerchief; put them on, then took them off, and wiped them again; at last, taking his huge snuff-box from his pocket, he took a great pinch, put on his spectacles once more, moved towards the table, lifted the *Times*, and sat down, with the paper in his hand, very slowly, in his easy chair; then, after examining the outside very carefully, he tore off the cover, and turned the paper till he came to the fatal list. As the old man read over carefully the names—first of the killed, then of the missing, and lastly of the wounded—he scarcely seemed to breathe. At last his task was finished; and, laying the paper across his knees, he heaved a great sigh of relief, and exclaimed, "Thank God, he is not there!"

In the breakfast parlour of Glenrora sat Violet, alone. Her parents had not yet come down. She was awaiting,

with beating heart, the arrival of the post. The footman entered with letters and papers on a silver salver. She took them from the salver without any show of emotion, but her pale cheek grew even paler as she waited till the servant left the room; then, laying aside the letters, she took the cover from the morning paper, and turning to the lists scanned them rapidly. She proceeded composedly for some time, but her eye at last fell on a familiar name — "Ensign Albert Macdougal, several gunshot wounds—*mortally* wounded." As she read these words, her head became giddy, the newspaper slipped from her hand, and she fell to the floor senseless!

CHAPTER XIV.

BALAKLAVA.

THE war in the Crimea has been so recent, and the details are so well known, that it is scarcely necessary for us here to sketch the course of events. It will be remembered that after the successful attack on the heights of Alma, and the determination of the English commander to make the seaport of Balaklava the spot for the landing of all the stores, ammunition, material for war, &c., the charge of this important position was confided to the Highland Brigade, under Sir Colin Campbell. How that duty was performed, let those heights held by "the red line" tell. Let the patient composure—while overwhelming masses of Russians were rapidly approaching as if to trample under foot that single file of kilted, plaided heroes—let the reserved fire, the calm, deliberate aim, the effective volley, the wild hurrah, as, bayonet in hand, they flung themselves upon the astonished thousands of terror-stricken Russians, tell. With the disastrous, though brilliant charge of the Light Brigade of Cavalry, in the same neighbourhood, our tale would have little to do, were it not that a young officer, the Marquis of Reston, who has played a somewhat prominent part in our pages, was there so severely wounded, that when some of his men, with the utmost gallantry, and at the imminent risk of their own lives, succeeded in carrying off his body, it was thought that life was extinct. It proved otherwise, however, and the Marquis survived the day which laid so many of England's chivalry in the dust.

And now these stirring scenes have passed away, and the dreary work of the siege has fairly begun. The

Highlanders, however, still occupy the heights, from which all the efforts of the enemy have failed to dislodge them, and do much useful service in assisting in the landing and transport of stores between the harbour and the besieging army. While at Balaklava, these gallant fellows, as the reader may well suppose, slept on no bed of roses. Working and toiling during the day in the mud, dirt, and slush of one of the filthiest little seaports in the world—sleeping, after their day's toil, on the wet, cold ground without the luxury of a covering (for this was ere public opinion at home was aroused to the necessities of our soldiers)—and often awakened from the sound sleep that fatigue will induce, even in such circumstances, by the call of the bugle, and the report that the enemy was approaching; and though these alarms often were false, they proved no less harassing on that account. Yes, reader! and say or think of it what we may, a harassing life it was. No wonder that, hardy and brave men though these mountaineers were, many of them should succumb to the almost unparalleled hardships to which they were exposed! No wonder that cholera, that fearful scourge, with its agonising spasms, its deadly cramps, and its fatal collapse, should sweep off its thousands to the tomb! But, reader, our soldiers had an enemy more formidable than the Russian, more hurtful to health than the cold and the wet and the damp, more fatal even than the deadly cholera—and that enemy was intoxicating drink! From its position in the vicinity of Balaklava, the Highland Brigade was more exposed to this vile influence than almost any other portion of the army; and though comforts, and even the necessaries of life, were often wanting, there never was any want of rum and gin—if the villanous stuff sold, at exorbitant prices, by unprincipled men, in spirit stores, which sprung up in myriads on every side, could be called such. The consequences, as may well be supposed, were most disastrous, and sickness prevailed to a degree that no hardship, no rigour of climate, could account for. Cholera, day by day, carried off its victims, and the hospital was filled with sick.

It has often been remarked that, during the campaign of which we write, the officers suffered far less from illness than the men; and as the opposite might have been expected, from the habits of luxury in which the former were reared, various theories have been put forward explanatory of the fact—such as, their superior feeding when young, and other equally potent reasons; but we don't know that the question has ever been asked, "Did the officers drink as much of the vile stuff denominated rum or gin sold at Balaklava, or did they drink it at all?"

The temptations to drink to which the poor fellows were exposed gave great uneasiness to some of the best of the officers, and several means were devised to restrain them from it, but with little effect. In the — Highlanders, though many of the officers were temperate men, yet none of them, save Sir Ronald, were out-and-out abstainers, and none of them could see the propriety of going to such extremes as he did in their endeavours to keep the men within the bounds of temperance. "Pooh! Pooh!" they would say, "it's all very well to talk, but it would be absolute cruelty to forbid the poor fellows, in the midst of their hard work, and of the cold and the dirt, and all what-not, to take a glass, or, for that matter, two, just to keep out the cold, and keep their spirits up!"

So the men took their glass, or their two, or their three, or, for that matter, their four glasses; for, as a friend of ours—a working man—said, "When he got ae gill, he wud gang ten miles for anither," they found it somewhat difficult to stop after they had once begun; and the sick increased daily, and the cholera, with its pestilential breath, went on in its work of destruction, and everything on the face of the earth was blamed for it but the real thing—drink!

In the meantime, our young friend—Sir Ronald, was not idle. He found among his men a few who, like himself, were abstainers, and encouraged by this fact, and also remembering that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, he set to work with a will, and soon succeeding

in inciting the abstainers to exertion, he formed a little society, consisting, in the first instance, of himself and the two or three we have mentioned. But, in the course of time, it increased till it mounted to a dozen. The society held its meetings weekly from the very outset; reported the efforts made, the success attending them, and the apparent progress of the movement, just as would be done at large meetings at home.

And Sir Ronald found his little plan succeed wonderfully. There is much power, as all the world knows, in sympathy; and the very fact of one of their officers coming and sitting with them, talking with them openly and frankly as man to man, or conversing with them kindly and affectionately as one brother to another, had a powerful influence for good. Moreover, our young officer stood on broad vantage ground. He did not require to say, as his brother officers would have required, "My lads we wish you would try and be a little more temperate, and not drink more than a glass or two of that wretched stuff you get in the town down there. You know the mischief it has done, and is still doing among you, and, in all affection, we would beg you to use just as little of it as possible. It is true we take a little daily, and it does us no harm; but the wine—the spirits we take are genuine, and that alters the case entirely. We pray you be persuaded, and drink as little as possible!"

No; Sir Ronald required to make no such absurd speech as that; but he could say, and did say, "Look at me, my men, and I think you'll admit that, though I'm young, you won't find a stronger, healthier man in the regiment, nor a man who could undergo more fatigue of body and mind. Since I came to the East I have never had a day's ill health; never so much as a headache even; and you know how much sickness and death have prevailed. How many of those who came out with us in health and vigour are sleeping on this foreign strand, not cut down by the bullet, or the sword, but swept off by the pestilence; and here am I, strong and vigorous as when we left our native land. My men, I

do not say these things in a boastful spirit—you know me better than that—but I say them just to assure you that, under God, I attribute the good health I have all along enjoyed to the simple fact that in the course of my life I have never tasted a drop of intoxicating drink, good, bad, or indifferent! What would you say to follow my example, and begin now with the determination never to taste another drop."

At other times he would point their attention to the deaths that were constantly occurring, and he would ask, in all solemnity, "Was that poor fellow who has been so suddenly hurried to God's judgment-seat a sober man?" To such a question no answer, generally, was given. The men would look at each other as if expecting some one to say "Yes." But instead of the simple affirmative, far more frequently the awfully significant shake of the head was the only reply. At other times Sir Ronald would encourage those present to relate their little histories, and the chief thing that induced them to enter the army. With some it was one thing, with some another. In one the love of a roving, and the temptation of a supposed idle, life; in another, ambition; in another still, the want of employment; but in the great majority of cases there was no motive whatever, the men having enlisted when under the influence of drink, and taken *the shilling* from the recruiting sergeant in some low public-house. One young man, in this way, had been lured away from an aged mother, whose only support he was; another, a respectable-looking man, had deserted, in an evil hour, his wife and family; a third, by his wicked ways, had brought a worthy father to the grave; and a fourth—but we need not go on, there is nothing new in all this; nothing but what everybody knows. It is an old story—unfortunately too old a story—that drink, strong intoxicating drink, has been at the bottom of nearly all the mischief that has been done in ancient or in modern times. Ay, reader, ever since the time that worthy old Noah, forgetting his godliness and his self-respect, slept

the stupid, sottish sleep of drunkenness in his Eastern tent, it has been one of the principal weapons in the hand of Satan for the destruction of souls.

But to return to the men. What was the result of this system of getting men enticed into public-houses by the smooth tongues of recruiting-sergeants, and then plying them with liquor, till, not knowing black from white, they swore in their patriotic enthusiasm to become the servants of their Queen, and seized the glittering coin, the pledge of their engagement, only to hand it to the landlord for more whisky, *more* to drink success to their new undertaking! What was the result? Why, in the breasts of some men, who felt they had been entrapped in an hour of temptation, hatred—unextinguishable, undying, hatred—was engendered towards the service, which no kindness and no explanation could subdue. It is true the poor fellows had as much loyalty to their Queen, as much respect for the honour of their country, as much pluck as ever; but they felt they had been grievously wronged, and this feeling led them to take no interest in the service, but, on the contrary, to cherish the determination of leaving it whenever an opportunity should offer. But there is another and a worse evil connected with the system than even that, viz., the tendency this custom has to fill our army with the off-scourings of the nation, whom nothing but the very extreme of martial law can keep within bounds, and to whose revenge, for being so kept, the lives of our officers are not unfrequently sacrificed. All these things were seen and keenly felt by Sir Ronald, who knew, also, how much there was to be done and how very puny and trifling anything he could do was to meet the existing evils. His little Temperance society, for instance, was nothing but a drop in the bucket, but still the day of small things was not to be despised. "Better a drop in the bucket," thought Sir Ronald, "than no drop at all;" and so he worked away right cheerfully, encouraged the steadfast, and gently admonished the backsliding, for, reader, he was not with-

out vexation in this way. Some of the poor fellows, even after signing the pledge, found it impossible to resist the sight, but especially the smell of rum and gin. In a short time the little society began to be talked about, but this did no harm. The attention of the regiment was attracted to it, and it was observed and candidly admitted, by some of the best officers that, small though it was, it was doing good. But it was laughed at also. Well, this did not much signify either. In this world there are always many to laugh at what is right; and a man is seldom of much value till he does something which will provoke the scorn of some. What great or good cause but has been laughed at, sneered at, characterised as visionary and utopian? What righteous, conscientious, self-denying man, perceiving the good and the true, and resolute in his determination to follow them, but has been called a wild enthusiast—a fanatic—a fool, fit only for Bedlam? And even He—the meek, the holy!—even He, the God-man—as He hung upon the cross, in the very act of accomplishing man's salvation—even He was pointed at by the finger of scorn, and at Him the head was wagged! What, then, can his followers expect in their efforts to do good? The servant is not above his master. As they have treated the Lord, so will they treat His disciple. We have said that Sir Ronald was laughed at—called a big fool, a goose, and a number of other names equally flattering and honouring; but for these, so long as he was convinced he was in the path of duty, he did not care one whit. And in spite of jeers, taunts, and laughter, "the Abstainer's Society" increased and prospered; and Sir Ronald was richly rewarded for his labour of love.

One morning, in the depth of winter, Sir Ronald accidentally met Captain (now Major) Gordon. They had both been doing duty on out-lying picket, and had both been exposed to the intense cold of the night in that rigorous climate.

"How are you, Macdonald?" asked the Major, holding out his hand as he spoke; "but I need not

ask; you are looking as fresh and as well as if imported yesterday from the heathery hills of our native Caledonia. Confound it! I wish we were all there together, and out of this wretched place (they were now at Kamara), with its nothing to do but turn out and turn in, its watch and wait, and wait and do nothing." Major Gordon tried to smile, but it would not do, and he shivered a real undisguised shiver.

Sir Ronald looked at him with anxiety. There was not one in his regiment whom he esteemed and respected more. "You are not well, Major, I fear," he said at last.

"Not exactly well, but scarcely ill—I am so confoundedly cold. If Mrs. Gordon were only here to give me a posset and a little good nursing, I should soon be all right—but its no use speaking of that," and the Major sighed. He was evidently depressed; but, in a more cheerful tone, however, he continued, "I wish you could give me your secret—your elixir of life, Sir Ronald."

Sir Ronald smiled. "Oh! I have but one secret, a simple one—you are welcome to it—a sort of grand panacea (like Holloway's pills) for all the evils flesh is heir to!"

"Come, man, let's have it—out with it, can you not?" said the Major, impatiently.

"It's no use telling you; it's no simple that you'll laugh it to scorn," said Sir Ronald.

"The simpler the better—let's hear it."

"*Drink nothing stronger than water*," said Sir Ronald, assuming an oracular air.

"Oh, I know you do that, Sir Ronald; but you don't mean to say that you impute your wondrous health to that very simple fact?"

"Indeed, I do; but didn't I tell you my panacea would be laughed at?"

"Not at all," said the major, in a more serious tone; "but if you are right in your notion, I must be egregiously far wrong in mine; for ever since I came to this place I have been daily increasing my quantum, in the hopes of keeping out the cold; and no later than last night I took

a stiff tumbler of rum-and-water—a pretty stiff one, I assure you—as a special means of fortifying myself against the night cold."

"And what was the result?" asked Sir Ronald.

"Result! why worse than ever; colder by far, after the momentary glow went off, than ever I was in my life. But perhaps the night was colder, in reality, than any we have had. Did you think so, Macdonald?"

Sir Ronald smiled. "No, Major; it was, I should say, rather the reverse. But your experience is just what I would have expected in the circumstances."

"How so?"

"Because it is most natural to suppose that, if artificial heat is excited in this wonderful frame of ours, the reaction which follows will only be the more intense."

"You speak like a little book, Sir Ronald; positively I am much disposed to follow your example."

"I wish you would, Major, for sure am I that you would never regret it."

"And you think it will do me good?"

"Certain of it; and I am also certain of another thing, Major."

"Pray what is that?

"That it will do you no harm!"

The Major smiled. "Well, if it's the right thing, the sooner I begin the better. I shall set about it to-day."

"I am delighted to hear it. You can't begin a moment too soon; but one thing I must ask in favour of my *simple* cure, that you give it a fair trial."

"I understand you; you shall see, Sir Ronald."

And so the friends parted.

CHAPTER XV.

SCUTARI.

On the sunny shores of the Bosphorus stand the great white walls of the hospital at Scutari, which, could they speak, would tell us tales which would thrill the hearts even of the bravest with horror! What sights and scenes of woe have those silent walls witnessed! What groans of pain—what sobs of anguish—have those dull walls heard! It is not on the battle-field that the brave man fears to die; but the spirit of the boldest quails in the contemplation of the racking, writhing pain—the raging fever—the throbbing brow—the nights of restless tossing and of weary sleeplessness which are associated with a hospital. Who can tell how many have passed from those great white walls with the name of some loved one in a distant land hanging on their dying lips; with the green hills of their country, which, alas! they will never see again, painted in their beauty before their dying eye; with the songs and sounds of childhood filling their dying ear; and with weeping forms of parents and kindred hovering around their dying bed? Yes, God is love! His ministering spirits can smooth the dying pillow, can fan the burning brow, can cool the parched lip, can fill the ravished ear with heavenly harmony, can place before the enraptured gaze visions "which eye hath not seen," can wrap the senses in elysium, and can bear on downy wings the joyous spirit, liberated from its frail earthly frame, to brighter worlds beyond the sky!

We will not contemplate the other side of the picture. Sad enough is it to see the poor body torn with anguish, and writhing in mortal agony, without adding to the

sorrowful spectacle the awful addition of a guilty conscience, gnawed by the never-dying worm of remorse.

In one of the wards of the hospital of Scutari, in which were two or three beds, but all of which, save the one occupied by himself, were now unused, lay the Marquis of Reston. He had suffered severely since the reader last saw him bleeding and lifeless on the heights of Balaklava. His left arm had been amputated, and his head and face were still bandaged, in consequence of a serious wound received in the side of the head, the bullet having torn away part of the cheek and grazed his ear. Fever set in after the amputation of the arm, and the poor Marquis has scarcely yet been pronounced out of danger. But a crisis has come—the delirium has ceased—and the fever-tossed patient has at last sunk into repose sweet and calm as that of a child upon the mother's breast.

Hours have passed, but still he sleeps! 'Tis now midnight. A night-lamp stands on a table in a corner of the apartment; beside it sits a tall elegant young woman, habited as a sister of mercy. Glancing at the watch, which lies on the table beside her, the nun rises, and glides noiselessly to the couch of the Marquis; she stoops over him, but hears no sound—his breathing seems even to have ceased. "Strange!" she murmurs, "the doctor said that before this time a change would take place." His arm lay outside the covering—she placed her small, soft, tapering fingers lightly on the pulse. Yes, life is still there—she can feel its beatings—but oh! how feeble! She tries to count those feeble pulsations, but finds it next to impossible. Suddenly she starts, and her fingers are removed from the wrist. The sick man has opened his eyes, has fixed them on the face of the nun, and, in a low weak voice, very different from that in which the ravings of delirium were uttered, has whispered "Rose!" The nun's face becomes crimson, and she places her finger on her lips in token of silence. The Marquis pays no attention to the sign, but again repeats the word "Rose!" Again the blood crimsons the fair temples of the nun, but this time she speaks, and, in good French, she says, "You are mistaken, I am called 'Sister Adèle.'"

"No, no; I am not mistaken, Rose. I would know you in a thousand," said the Marquis, impetuously.

"This is fearful; you will kill yourself," said the nun. "I must insist on silence. If you will talk, I must call the doctor."

"Just a word, and I am done," said the Marquis. "Rose, you are a brave, noble, good girl—far too good for me—and most grievously have I wronged you; and I now swear, in the sight of Heaven, that my first act, if God restores me to health, will be to make you my bride, and acknowledge you as such in the face of the world!"

The Marquis, who had slightly raised his head from the pillow while he spoke, sank back completely exhausted. The nun, in terror, administered a restorative, and then, having the satisfaction of seeing some signs of returning animation, she withdrew to a corner of the room, completely concealed from the view of the invalid, in order to prevent a repetition of such a dangerous and exciting scene.

And in the gloomy corner of that sick ward, who can describe the emotions that, under the sombre dress of the nun, agitated the breast of that poor girl. Rose—for it was no other, and the Marquis was not mistaken—had heard the solemn vow he had now made, and her heart beat violently as she asked the question, "Was he in earnest?" Was it possible that she, the poor outcast, the waif, the pariah of society, should again be enabled to hold up her head in the world, should regain her fair fame, should yet be an honoured wife, a respected mother? Was it possible? She feared not. It was too good to be true. And in very bitterness of spirit the poor girl laid her head between her hands and wept.

Yet tears were a relief to Rose—it was long since she had wept. Even in the midst of their mad love, when she was the new idol of the Marquis; when she was caressed and adored, petted, and pampered in every whim; when she was, as the Marquis delighted to call her, "the mistress of his soul," even then Rose was not unvisited

by remorse; even then her conscience rebuked her for her shocking behaviour to her parents, brothers, and only sister; even then suspicions would arise that, perhaps, the object of her great love was unworthy of her. But then the Marquis was by her side; his honeyed voice was at her ear, and her remorse was drowned in pleasure, in wine, not unfrequently in brandy!

The time came, however, and speedily, when the novelty being gone, Reston's love began to cool, and other objects began to engross his attention; and then it was, during the long evenings he spent in play, or during the days and weeks he would spend in shooting and other excursions, that Rose awoke to all the misery of her situation.

A stranger in a strange land, known by few, and even by those few known only as an object of pity—an object of scorn—as the pretty mistress of the wild young Marquis of Reston! Poor Rose! low indeed art thou fallen! Little did'st thou imagine, a short year ago, when thou wert the admired of all, the star of the most brilliant assembly, that such would be thy destiny! Little did'st thou imagine that the time would so soon come when thou would'st wish thou had'st never been born! or that, even now, thy young head might speedily be laid beneath the turf!

During those days and hours of darkest solitude Rose had but one consolation—and that was brandy! Not that she had yet gone so far as to drink hard, or to forget all self respect; but she kept her spirits up as, she thought, by the use of it; sipping it in small quantities daily till the excitement it produced became part of her existence. Yes, brandy had been the first cause in the ruin of poor Rose, and brandy now was sustaining her in the way of destruction! But it was only during the temporary absence of the Marquis that Rose was called upon to endure misery! With his return came love, joy, gaiety, and festivities of all kinds. His house was filled with jovial fellows who, as long as the viands were *recherché*, and the wines first rate, did not care a straw

whether the fair creature who presided was mistress or wife! And then, there were theatres, balls, operas, masquerades, and all the round of dissolute amusements, in which the dissolute inhabitants of dissolute France seek to find pleasure, and to all of which the Marquis publicly and openly escorted Rose as if she were his wife. In fact, he repeatedly declared that he considered her far more his wife than if she were so in the eye of the law, and that, having so nobly confided to his honour, she would find that she never would be taken undue advantage of. His honour! It was just by that species of sophistry he had lured his victim from her father's rpof. 'Marriage,' he had said, 'was, in his opinion, nothing but a legal ceremony fitted to stifle all true love; marriage was a species of slavery fitted only for fools who fancied that law was love, and that a Christian ceremony ensured fidelity; for his part,' the Marquis had also said, 'he did not intend to marry unless she (Rose) compelled him. If she could not confide to his love, his honour, his gratitude, he would conduct her to the altar, and swear anything and everything she pleased, for he was determined never to part from her; but, at the same time,' he added, 'he would much fear that such a ceremony would prove the very grave of their love. Would his beloved Rose insist on such a sacrifice when attended with such fearful risks? Would she not rather, of her noble, generous nature, sacrifice some of the petty conventional forms of society to their mutual love?' Of course all this was not said at once, but it was poured into her ear on every suitable opportunity; for the Marquis was cunning as the old serpent himself, and knew precisely the right moment to whisper his devilish suggestions. And when the time came, at last, that the tempter thought he might venture to ask the poor girl to choose between honourable, lawful marriage, and dishonourable, unlawful love—and when Rose requested a day to think about it—and when she retired to the solitude of her chamber, not to ask counsel of the all-seeing Jehovah, but to consult the leanings of

her own ill-matured judgment; and when she added the brandy to assist her in her deliberations, need the result be wondered at? We have said that the Marquis hailed the summons to join his regiment with pleasure, and it would be impossible to describe the anguish which filled the breast of Rose, as she witnessed the almost undisguised joy in which the Marquis indulged at the prospect of his departure. At last, his hurried preparations were made, and the hour came for their separation. Kissing the weeping girl who clung to him, sobbing as if her heart would break, he freed himself from her encircling arms, and, placing a cheque for £200 in her hands, said, "Farewell, dearest, I will write soon; I will also arrange with my London banker to send you as much quarterly; so I do hope, darling, you will make yourself happy."

"Happy!" sobbed Rose, "the thing's impossible!"

"Not impossible, I assure you," replied Reston. "Young ladies of your character don't often die of broken hearts. I could swear you'll have another lover in the course of a month!"

"Oh, Reston! how can you speak in that way!" exclaimed the weeping girl.

But he heard her not. Reston was gone! For some weeks Rose lingered in the beautiful villa which the Marquis had taken for her, and where they had spent the short year of their unhallowed love; but, heart-sick and weary, the wretched girl could enjoy nothing. What was comfort or luxury to her when the idol of her heart was gone? Could beauty of landscape—vine-trellised gardens—or fairest flowers, make up for his absence? And he had said—ah! that was the most cruel touch of all—that she would soon find another lover! She! who had sacrificed her family—her fortune—her fair name—her position—her all for him! *She!* Never did that remark occur to her mind but the blood rushed to her face, crimsoning her very temples, and her heart would throb as she asked herself the question, "I wonder what Reston takes me for?" And then she would feel how bitterly her conduct in deserting her parents might justify him in his

cruel supposition. But notwithstanding Rose's foolish, not to say wicked, behaviour, the Marquis had formed a very false estimate of her character. He had judged her by a class of women with which he was too familiar—a class who deck their cheeks with borrowed blushes, and wreath their lips in seductive smiles to please the passing lover of the hour—who pass their nights in revelry, and their miserable days in the habitual use of intoxicating liquors, till a few years see their short-lived charms faded, their faces haggard, blotches instead of blushes, "burning instead of beauty," and they, themselves, in beggary and wretchedness, deserted by their *adorers*, obliged to end their sad career in hospital and poorhouse, or, perhaps, to put an end to their miserable existence with their own hands, adding to all their crimes the crime of suicide!

Talk of "the social evil!"—drinking is *the social evil!* But for the drinking customs of society not one of a hundred (we speak advisedly, and any one who has looked at society, even in a superficial way, will corroborate our statement)—not one of a hundred of these poor victims would ever have been lured from the paths of virtue!

But to return to Rose. The Marquis had completely mistaken her character. It had many elements of a noble nature, and the lessons of warning and wisdom she had received from her governess did not fail often to recur to her memory. Rose's great misfortune was an injudicious, thoughtless mother; her great crime, loving the Marquis—"not wisely, but too well." And now—*now*—she was paying the penalty, when not nineteen years of age, of her foolish training, and her mad love. Poor Rose! the heart bleeds for her as she sits in the exquisitely furnished boudoir of her lovely villa, and glances round, with restless eye, on painting and statue, on vases filled with fairest flowers, on mirrors reflecting her own fair form, on everything, in short, which can gratify the most refined taste; see her sometimes bury her head in her bosom, and clasp her hands as if in agony, sometimes sip a little brandy from a handsomely cut crystal bottle standing on a small table by her side. Poor Rose! she has not yet learned what her great bane is.

While she sits there she is debating in her own mind what course she ought to pursue. "Will she arise and go to her father?" He was always kind, always indulgent —he will forgive her even now! "Yes, yes," says Conscience, "take the words of the prodigal on thy lips, and go at once!" "No, no," says Pride; "what, confess that *you* have erred? If any are to blame, your parents are far more guilty than you, for they encouraged the addresses of the Marquis; it is *their* business to seek you out, not yours to go to them." Again Rose sipped a little brandy, and again her head was buried in her hands. No, she would not go home—pride carried the day. But a new and bright idea struck her—she would become a nun —she would immolate her fresh youth in the cloister— she would prove her fidelity to her first love—she would purge away her sin by prayer and penance—she would be the bride of Heaven! Strange, she had never thought of this before! It was just the thing.

Rose was the creature of impulse. No sooner was her plan formed than it was executed. Her fine villa was given up, her handsome furniture sold, and the proceeds, which were considerable, with the two hundred pounds given her by the Marquis, were at once handed over to a convent in the neighbourhood, in which a number of "sisters of mercy" resided, and Rose, declaring that her mind was so fully made up that she wished for no noviciate, had her glorious tresses shorn off, and took the black veil at once.

Months passed quietly on, and Rose, under the name of Sister Adele, seemed quite reconciled to her fate. There was something in the quiet, dreamy-like repose of the convent that suited the gloom that hung upon her spirits; and the daily duties of prayer and penance she was called on to perform proved an alleviation to her afflicted mind. The poor girl fancied that, at last, she had found a haven of repose, and that her mad love was buried for ever in the recesses of her heart. And in the gentle nun who, with downcast eye and pallid cheek, trod the stone-paved corridors, or knelt in her chilly cell and

counted her beads when the bell called for morning and evening prayers, who would have recognised the once pleasure-loving Rose?

But a circumstance occurred, which not only changed the tenor of her life, but aroused the passions which were still slumbering in her breast.

By some chance, an English newspaper found its way within the convent walls; it was some weeks old, but it contained an account of the battle of Balaklava, and a list of the killed and wounded. In the list Rose saw the name of one who was still very dear to her. The poor girl in an instant forgot her grievous wrongs—forgot everything but her lover in pain and suffering in a distant land, surrounded by strangers—she determined to go to him—but how? Days and nights were spent in forming plans of escape, which were generally dismissed as useless as soon as they were formed. One morning, however, just as Rose had formed a desperate attempt to escape, the Lady Superior summoned the nuns to her presence, informed them that Government intended sending some nuns to nurse the wounded, and inquired whether any of them would be disposed to join their sisters, and go out with them on their noble mission of humanity. What a chance for Rose! But to allay suspicion she waited till a few others had volunteered, and then entered her name.

The bevy of good nuns soon sailed, and, after a favourable voyage, reached Scutari in safety. Arrived there, Rose announced herself as an Englishwoman, and begged, as a special favour, that she might be allowed to nurse her own countrymen. Her request was acceded to; and this settled, she soon managed to constitute herself the nurse of the Marquis, who, when she arrived, was at the very height of the fever. And from that time how tenderly—how carefully—how constantly had she nursed him!—him who had lured her from her home, and robbed her of all that woman holds most dear! But all this is forgiven and forgotten now—now, as with more than mother's love, the poor girl stoops over the couch of the wounded and mutilated patient, and listens to his delirious

ravings, in which her own name is often mentioned, and always in terms of endearment. And her heart beats with pleasure as she feels that he loves her still!

And now the crisis past, what words are those that in all solemn composure fall from the lips of the Marquis? What solemn vow is that which he has, even now, registered in heaven? "That he will make her his wife!" No wonder she asks herself, "Is he in earnest?" If so, she will bless God for his sufferings! No wonder that Rose weeps—weeps tears of joy, and that those tears are followed by a holy calm, to which she has long been a stranger.

From this time the Marquis rapidly improved, and in a few weeks was able to leave the hospital and to embark for England.

A day or two after his departure one of the nuns was missing, but in the constant influx of patients little notice was taken of the fact.

CHAPTER XVI.

DESOLATION.

THE saying, "that misfortunes seldom come singly," was amply verified in the case of Mr. Macdougal and his family. Scarcely had they recovered from the shock caused by the death of Albert, when another, and, perhaps, even a more severe blow, awaited them in a very different quarter. We say more severe, at least to Mr. Macdougal and his wife, because it affected their position, their comfort, and what they considered their indispensable luxuries. One morning Mr. Macdougal received a letter containing the disastrous news that the bank in which the greater part of his large fortune was invested had failed, and that he was almost a ruined man!

This was an ordeal many have to pass through, and from which many come out bravely, ennobled, strengthened, and purified. Unfortunately, however, this was not the case with Macdougal. Though Glenrora still belonged to him, and though, with the exertion of a little energy and a reduction of his unnecessarily large establishment to suit his limited fortune, he might still have lived with comfort and respectability, yet the little energy was not forthcoming, and our lofty friend could not tolerate the idea of reducing his *menage* by a single horse or a single domestic. On his man of business suggesting "That he might with advantage dispose of his valuable stud of hunting horses," he replied that he could never think of such a thing! that it was absurd to think of living in the country without a good stud, and that he would sooner die than disgrace himself in the eyes of his neighbours.

It was in vain that his lawyer urged that misfortune was no disgrace, and that, instead of disgracing himself, he would rise in the estimation of all right-thinking people by conforming his expenses to his altered circumstances.

Mr. Macdougal was immovable.

"What would he do, then?" asked his lawyer.

"Do! Why he did not know. All he knew was, that it was a deuced bad business, and that it was a disgrace to the country to allow people to be swindled in the manner he had been."

To this remark the lawyer assented, but at the same time most politely suggested, "that it was absolutely necessary that something should be done."

"Well, I suppose so," replied Mr. Macdougal, "and the only thing I can think of is to sell Glenrora, and go abroad."

"If you can't make up your mind to retrench, that appears the only alternative. But you have still a son; for his sake will you not endeavour to preserve the property?"

"My son must provide for himself," replied Mr. Macdougal, "and perhaps it is the best thing that can happen to him. My family have been too much indulged by their foolish mother," he added bitterly, "and I believe it was a fortunate thing that my eldest perished, fighting for his country, as I am pretty sure he would otherwise have gone to the dogs!"

The lawyer was silent, and Mr. Macdougal continued in a gentler tone, "I have *one* daughter for whom I should like to make an adequate provision. She has ever been dutiful and affectionate, and I feel it hard that she should be involved in the general ruin."

"You can scarcely call it ruin, Mr. Macdougal," said his lawyer; "you have still Glenrora, with its clear rental of £3,000 a year. Many would be but too glad to exchange places with you. If you could only make up your mind to——"

"I know what you would say," interrupted Mr.

Macdougal impetuously, "and it's no use, I tell you." Seeing that his man of business looked confounded, he added, "However, I shall think over the matter, and let you know my decision in a few days, or a week at the latest."

And with this decision his agent was fain to be satisfied, and bade his employer "Good morning," doubting not that the few days' consideration would bring Mr. Macdougal to his senses.

But in this he was mistaken. Mr. Macdougal did not think over it; he drank over it. What could be more natural? Brandy had been his grand panacea for all his troubles hitherto, why should it not be so now? There was no reason in the world why it should not. So Mr. Macdougal retired to his library, morning after morning, to think over his affairs and the decision he ought to come to concerning them, with brandy and water beside him to aid his deliberations (he did not trouble the water much, it was ordered more as a cover than anything else), and he retired from it night after night in a state of helpless drunken stupidity; and in this state was generally assisted to bed by Violet and our old friend Sam, who at this critical juncture proved of the greatest use to the drunkard's almost heartbroken daughter.

At the end of the week, as may well be supposed, Mr. Macdougal's deliberations were no further advanced than when they were begun; but one great result had been attained. He had made himself perfectly mad! A whole week's hard drinking had proved rather too much for even such a seasoned toper, and on the eighth day he was fit only for a lunatic asylum. This was an awful state of matters. Even Violet's sweet voice seemed to have lost its accustomed charm, and no one else dared to approach him or address him. As for food, he would take none—nothing but brandy—always brandy! The household were in terror; his wife, on whom all his hatred seemed to be concentrated, locked herself up in a remote apartment; and Violet alone ventured to watch

him. Fortunately, he did not seek to leave the house; and Violet thought that, could he only be lured to bed and to sleep, all might yet be well. Vain hope! "There is no peace for the wicked," and in an awfully true sense does this apply to the *drunkard!*

In the mean time Mr. Graham had been sent for, and a servant had been despatched to a neighbouring town for an eminent physician.

Mr. Graham was not long in obeying Violet's request, and in a short time was by her side. "What is to be done?" was Violet's first breathless question. She lost no time in explanations, nor were any needed. Mr. Graham had long known the real state of matters, and, though very much shocked, was yet almost prepared for this.

"The first, the best, the only thing I can suggest for your poor father is to get him to bed," said Mr. Graham, in answer to Violet's question.

"But how?" asked Violet.

"By gentle means if possible—by force if necessary," replied Mr. Graham.

Violet's hand was still held by Mr. Graham, who, looking in her sad face, said, "I can't tell, Miss Violet, how my heart bleeds for you!" These few words of sympathy—the first she had heard for a long time, completely unnerved Violet, and withdrawing her hand from Mr. Graham, she sank upon a couch and wept bitterly. Mr. Graham did not speak, he knew that tears would prove a relief to her, and so she wept and sobbed for some time, till the door of the room in which they were was flung open with a great bang, and the maniac entered. Accustomed though Mr. Graham was to sights and scenes of misery, he was not prepared for the spectacle which now presented itself. Before him stood Mr. Macdougal, a perfect wreck of what he had been. His hair was dishevelled, his eyes wild and bloodshot, his face haggard, his lips bright, hot, and red, and his whole expression excited in the highest degree. He was only partially dressed, having on trousers and shirt, but no coat; his bare feet

were thrust into slippers, and in his hand he carried a pistol. Walking right up to his daughter, he said, in a gentle voice, "What, weeping, love! Who has dared to annoy you?" Then, turning suddenly, his eye fell upon Mr. Graham, and, in a fierce tone, he broke out, "Oh, it's you, you scoundrel! You shall pay for this. I'll shoot you dead on the spot!" And quick as thought the pistol was at the minister's breast.

Violet screamed, and flung herself between them. Pushing her father's arm gently aside, she exclaimed, "Oh, papa! dearest papa! pray do not—it is Mr. Graham, our good, kind minister—you never could hurt him!"

"Mr. Graham, our good, kind minister," said Mr. Macdougal, repeating his daughter's words slowly after her; his face, meanwhile, wearing a stupid, blank expression, as if the words conveyed no idea whatever to his mind. In a few minutes, however, a light began to appear in his eye, and holding out his hand to Mr. Graham, he said, with much of the politeness which characterised him in other days, "Oh! Mr. Graham, I beg your pardon, I am sorry I should have made such a mistake; but this poor, foolish head of mine—I fear misfortune has turned my brain. Yes, yes, I remember you perfectly now; I always entertained a great respect for you—always thought you a prudent, sensible man, and remember being delighted to find you did not object to a glass of wine, or a little toddy. I always placed great value on your opinion." Then, walking up to the bell, he rang it furiously. A servant entered. "A glass of wine for Mr. Graham immediately—or perhaps," turning to our minister as he spoke, "you would prefer brandy, sir?" Mr. Graham could not speak. During the latter part of the poor man's remarks he had felt the blood rush to his face, and crimson his temples. "Was it possible," he could not help asking himself, "that his opinion uttered many years ago, and without much thought, could have had any influence upon that ruined drunkard before him?" "Was it possible that he was not guiltless of the blood of that lost fellow-sinner?"

He shuddered at the thought. The servant still waited for his answer.

"Wine, or brandy, sir," he asked.

"*Neither*," replied Mr. Graham, emphatically.

"Then quick! quick! brandy for me, sir," shouted Mr. Macdougal; and breaking into a loud laugh, he exclaimed, "I thought to have had the pleasure of your company, Mr. Graham, but I am mistaken. You are not the man I took you for—nothing but a poor puling parson after all. But never mind, it's all right, old fellow! we'll never say die!" and the poor maniac began to sing in a loud discordant voice, and to make the most extraordinary gestures. Mr. Graham followed the servant from the room, and said hurriedly, "Appear with brandy, and then carry it to his bedroom; and have at hand two or three of the strongest servants; your poor master *must* be got to bed."

"Yes'r, yes'r," said the servant. "Oh! sir, it's awfu' to see how poor master takes on; the brandy he drinks is awfu'; oh! sir, I know not what to do, I'm sure it's not right to give him't, an' yet what can we do?—he carries a loaded pistol, an' threatens to blow out our brains if we refuse it."

"It's very sad," said Mr. Graham, "but if we can only get him to bed all may yet be well."

At this moment Macdougal came out of the room, shouting "Brandy! brandy! quick!" and the servant disappeared like lightning to obey his order. Meanwhile Violet, obeying Mr. Graham's suggestion, went up to her father, and laying her hand gently on his arm, whispered softly in his ear, "Papa, dearest, you are not well; will you allow me to help you to bed? I am sure a short sleep will do you good."

"Sleep!—do me good!—who says I'm ill?" shouted the madman, furiously.

Violet trembled, but she made an effort to conceal her terror.

"And pray," continued he, gazing vacantly in her face, "who are you, that dare dictate to me?"

"I am Violet, your own daughter Violet," sobbed the trembling girl.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Macdougal, "my daughter! That's good. I had *two* daughters once—one is a——, the other is an angel; she was too good to live, and I saw her fly up to heaven through the blue, blue sky! Hands off, woman, I say!" he shouted once more, addressing Violet, "I tell you I want nothing but brandy—brandy—brandy!" His voice was hoarse and husky with shouting, and his last yell was most unearthly.

The servant appeared at this instant with a bottle and glass, but, following Mr. Graham's injunctions, he allowed his master only to see it, and then retired rapidly to his master's bedchamber, where the bottle and glass were placed upon a table. This *ruse* had the desired effect. Macdougal quickly followed, entered the room, and seated himself quietly at the table, intending to commence operations. Mr. Graham and Violet, who had followed him unperceived, now entered, Mr. Graham taking the precaution to lock the door, and put the key in his pocket after entering.

Every article in the room which could be used as an offensive weapon had been carefully removed by Mr. Graham's orders, and three servants were concealed in the dressing-room, to be ready for the worst, should it be necessary.

Mr. Macdougal swallowed a glassful, and was proceeding to take another, when Mr. Graham, putting out his hand, removed the bottle, and then said in that commanding tone, which is sometimes so potent with the insane, "Now, sir, undress and go to bed."

The poor man gave a stare as though he did not understand him, but, nevertheless, began undressing, and in a a short time quietly went and lay down in bed. Mr. Graham was delighted with the success of his experiment, but ventured not, either by word or look, to show any sign thereof. The room was immediately darkened, and every endeavour made to prevent any noise or disturbance which might startle or annoy the wretched

sufferer. A heavy sleep soon overpowered him, though there was a constant starting and a quivering of the muscles of the face, which showed the fearful state of the nervous system. Mr. Graham and Violet, thanking Heaven for the measure of repose he was enjoying, withdrew to a neighbouring apartment. Here our minister, falling on his knees, poured out a prayer for the wretched man and his afflicted family, and entreated the God of consolation to comfort his afflicted daughter in this hour of darkness and sorrow. Mr. Graham's voice faltered; he stopped, and, rising, pressed Violet's hand while the tears rained down his manly face. Oh, the power of sympathy! Violet felt more comforted and composed than she had done since the commencement of her father's illness; and when a servant entering announced the arrival of the physician, it was with a measure of self-possession—to which she had for some time been a stranger—that she prepared to go to the drawing-room to receive him, But Mr. Graham prevented her by saying, "As your mother is indisposed, perhaps, my dear Miss Violet, it would be better for me to see the doctor—at least, in the first instance; I might explain to him better than you the——" Mr. Graham paused.

"Yes, yes, thank you, Mr. Graham," broke in Violet, "I shall wait here. Should Dr. Malcolm wish to see me, pray send."

"Certainly, Miss Violet; but you may rest assured that the doctor shall have all needful information."

"How can I thank you?" said Violet, as she left the room.

On entering the drawing-room, Dr. Malcolm, whom Mr. Graham had met before, came forward, and after shaking hands, said, "This seems to have been a very sudden illness of Mr. Macdougal's. What are the symptoms?"

"I fear he is insane," replied Mr. Graham.

"Insane," said the doctor; that's shocking. Do you know of anything that could have produced insanity?"

"He has had severe family trials," replied Mr. Graham, "And within the last few weeks he has lost the bulk of his great fortune."

"Well, these things are very sad, and very trying," replied the physician, "but still they are occurring every day, and are often submitted to with much patience and resignation. Are you of opinion that these were the only causes?"

"I fear I must add another and sadder cause," replied Mr. Graham, in a lower voice. "During the last week my poor friend has been drinking incessantly."

"Indeed! that explains it. You should have told me that *first*, Mr. Graham."

"I thought it possible that the other causes I mentioned might have unhinged his mind in the first instance, and—"

"That the drink brought the disease to a climax," said the doctor, smiling.

"Something of that kind," replied Mr. Graham.

"Depend upon it, my dear sir," said Dr. Malcolm, you are quite wrong; nothing but the drink produced the insanity. Ah! most of the madness in this world is directly traceable to the use of that abominable drink, though everything but *that* is blamed for it. How is Mr. Macdougal at the present moment?"

"At present he sleeps," replied Mr. Graham.

"That's well," said the doctor. "Everything depends on repose in the first place, and abstinence in the second."

After putting a few more questions concerning Mr. Macdougal's deportment when he was awake, which fully confirmed the physician in his opinion, they proceeded together to the room of the patient.

The poor man still slept; but his face was flushed, his features distorted by nervous twitchings, and his parched, dry tongue was ever and anon protruded out between his red burning lips, while his breath had already filled the whole room with the fumes of brandy.

"It is just as I supposed," said the doctor, as he turned from the bed. "He is suffering from '*delirium*

tremens.' I shall wait in some room near till he wakes, and then administer an opiate. It is difficult to say what phase the disease will assume next."

"I always thought," said Mr. Graham, as they left the apartment, "that the disease you mention manifested itself by the sufferer fancying he saw all manner of imps and crawling reptiles sporting and creeping around and about him."

"So it does generally; but not always. Fits of wild delirious madness are not unfrequently among the earlier stages; but there is a great variety in the symptoms, just as there is in the constitutions of those attacked. The only thing that I can't understand is this: I always thought that Mr. Macdougal was a temperate man, and how he could all at once have gone to such an excess is what puzzles me."

"May I ask what you consider a temperate man, Dr. Malcolm?"

"Certainly, Mr. Graham; I consider a temperate man one who takes a glass or two of wine at dinner, and a tumbler or so of toddy before going to bed, and I never thought that Mr. Macdougal exceeded that."

"He *began* with that," said Mr. Graham, with the slightest possible touch of irony in his voice; "but I have good reason to know that for many years he has taken great quantities of strong drink, especially brandy, and that he was in the habit of taking daily what would have made even a temperate man of your description very tipsy."

"Indeed," replied Dr. Malcolm, "that throws light upon my difficulty. Mr. Macdougal's constitution must have been good to have stood such treatment so long."

"Yes, he used to boast," said Mr. Graham, "that he never had an illness in his life!"

"Poor man; he'll not be able to say that again. I fear this present illness may prove very dangerous," said the doctor; "and then," he continued, "I suspect my idea of a temperate man does not quite come up to yours, Mr. Graham?"

"*Not quite*," said Mr. Graham.

"*Touch not, taste not, handle not!*" said the doctor smiling, "a Rechabite of the Rechabites—a rabid tee-totaller!"

"Now, doctor," said Mr. Graham, "I think you are going a little too far. I am proud to plead guilty to the charge of being an out and out abstainer, and I am sure, with the present sad example of the fatal effects of drunkenness before our eyes, even *you* will admit that at least there is safety in the opinion I hold."

"Oh, certainly; if a man never drinks, he'll never get drunk," replied Dr. Malcolm; "but the evil lies in the abuse, not in the use."

"Well, if it were not used, it could not be abused," replied Mr. Graham. "But with all seriousness, doctor, I hope the day is not far distant when the profession to which you belong, and which exercises such unbounded influence over every rank in society, will be united heart and hand in putting down what you will admit to be the crying evil of our day."

"Oh, I will admit that at once," said Dr. Malcolm. "Indeed, it is impossible to deny it. My only difficulty is with regard to the best means for the suppression of the evil."

"Well, our plan has the recommendation of simplicity, at all events," said Mr. Graham. "What would you think of giving it a trial, doctor?"

"I might do worse," said the doctor, laughing; "but I fear I am like many more in this world, who

> 'Know the good, and who approve it too;
> Condemn the bad and yet the bad pursue.'"

Mr. Graham was about to reply, when a loud yell resounded through the Castle, causing both gentlemen to start to their feet, and to hasten to the room of the patient. The wretched man had flung himself from the bed to the floor, where he now lay writhing and foaming as if possessed by an evil spirit; it was a fearful sight, and Mr. Graham, turning away his head, said, "Oh, Doctor, can this not be put a stop to?"

"Yes, yes, it must be put a stop to, or the man will kill himself," replied the physician hurriedly.

Servants were called in, who, by the doctor's orders, once more placed Macdougal on his bed. But this was not accomplished without much difficulty, for the poor wretch struggled hard to prevent them, and his shouts, and oaths, and imprecations were horrible to hear.

While this was going on, Mr. Graham caught a glimpse of a very white face peering in through the half open door. It was Violet, and Mr. Graham, leaving the room for an instant, endeavoured to reassure her, and calm her fears by words of encouragement and hope. When he returned he found that Dr. Malcolm had succeeded in administering the opiate, and under its powerful influence Macdougal was already composed, and in a few minutes was fast asleep once more.

"There, now," said the doctor, as he turned from the bedside of his patient, "I have quieted our poor friend for a few hours, at least. When he awakes he must get another. I shall leave the dose. Is there any one who may be entrusted to see that he gets it?"

"Certainly," replied Mr Graham, "I shall see that he gets it. I don't intend to go home to-night."

"I am glad of that. It is of the utmost importance he should be watched, and the medicine administered, if possible, before he has time to get out of bed. You understand me?"

"Perfectly; and I will see your orders fulfilled to the letter."

"Thank you. I must leave now; but I shall return to-morrow morning, when I hope to hear that Mr. Macdougal has passed a quiet night. Will you kindly order my carriage, Mr. Graham?"

Mr. Graham put his hand on the bell. "May I venture to ring?"

The doctor smiled. "You may thunder, if you like. Our patient won't waken easily at the present moment."

The carriage being ready, the physician took his departure, leaving Mr. Graham to his self-imposed labour of love.

After Dr. Malcolm's departure, Mr. Graham told Violet what the physician had done and what he had ordered, at the same time announcing his own intention of remaining all night and seeing the doctor's orders carried into effect. Violet was but too thankful; it was such a relief to have a strong arm on which to lean—a strong, brave heart to comfort and counsel her. She had not words to express her gratitude. But words were not necessary; Mr. Graham could read it in the tearful eye and in the hopeful gleam which brightened for an instant her saddened countenance. And as she made one or two ineffectual attempts at thanks, her kind friend, laying his hand on her shoulder, prevented her, saying, "Not a word on the subject, if you please, dear Miss Violet; all I am going to ask is obedience to my commands."

A smile and then a sigh, as if the former were a forbidden thing, ere Violet answered, in a low voice, "I don't think I shall have any difficulty in obeying your orders, Mr. Graham."

"We shall see, Miss Violet. My first is, that you take some refreshment; my second is, that you go to bed."

"I don't feel inclined to take anything—but that reminds me you've had neither coffee nor tea!"—"Dear me," she added, drawing her hand mechanically across her brow, "how stupid I am getting!" She laid her hand on the bell.

"Stop, Miss Violet, if you please—I will take tea on only one condition, and that is, that you have some also."

"Certainly, I understand you," said Violet, ringing.

Tea was speedily procured, and Violet made an effort to drink off a cupful, but without any real enjoyment in it. While they were so engaged, Mrs. Macdougal, having ascertained from the servant that her husband was asleep, ventured from her place of concealment, and entered the parlour where they were sitting. Her manner and appearance were excited in the highest degree, and holding out both hands to Mr. Graham, she said, in a hysterical tone of voice, "Oh, Mr. Graham, how kind of you to

come—how glad I am to see you! Isn't this shocking? Poor Macdougal! What is to become of us!" And burying her head in her hands, and bursting into a fit of tears, she sank on the nearest couch.

"Pray compose yourself, dear madam," said Mr. Graham; "your husband will soon be better, the doctor gives us good hopes—"

"But the man is mad!" said Mrs. Macdougal abruptly, "I dare not stay in the house with him."

"Yes—but he will soon be better."

"I cannot believe you—I cannot believe you! The only thing I can think of is to have him sent to an asylum."

"Dearest mamma," said Violet, in a soothing tone, "do try and be calm. You hear what Mr. Graham says, and in a day or two I am sure poor papa will be quite well."

"You may say so, child, but I know better." And again Mrs. Macdougal sobbed and wailed like a child.

Both Mr. Graham and Violet felt that it was no use endeavouring to say anything further on the subject at that time, and so the poor woman was left to the indulgence of her sorrows, which ever and anon broke out into fearful bursts of uncontrollable emotion. At last, rising from her seat, she paced the room, wringing her hands in agony. Violet had poured out a cup of tea, and, approaching her poor mother, tried to prevail upon her to take it, but in vain. Mrs. Macdougal, turning to Mr. Graham, said, "I can stay here no longer; pray excuse me." Ere he had time to answer she rapidly left the room. Violet followed, and after a brief absence returned with the pleasing intelligence that she had prevailed on her mamma to go to bed.

"I'm glad you've succeeded," said Mr. Graham; "and as you've taken some tea, and thus obeyed my first order, I must now insist on my second, which is, that you also go to bed immediately."

Violet was inclined to demur; she did not feel at all sleepy—would much prefer to sit up with her papa—would—

"Perfect obedience, Miss Violet," said Mr. Graham. "Rest is absolutely necessary for you." In a kindly tone he added—"You will oblige me thus far."

Violet looked at him with eyes brimful of tears.

"And my poor papa?"

"Shall be watched and waited on by me," said Mr. Graham; "have I not promised? can you not trust me, darling Violet?"

"I can, I will," said the poor girl. "I shall go now; pray want for nothing that you require for your comfort."

"I shall want nothing," replied Mr. Graham; "I go now to his chamber. Good night, Miss Violet!"

"Good night, Mr. Graham; may Heaven reward you."

With the first grey streaks of dawn Violet was up and dressed. She had not slept, but she had rested, and she felt refreshed and cheered in body and mind. After quietly ordering breakfast, she went to her father's room, and found, much to her delight, that he had passed a quiet night, Mr. Graham assuring her that after giving Mr. Macdougal his medicine, he had himself enjoyed some refreshing sleep.

So far everything was progressing in the most satisfactory manner, and it was with a lighter heart than poor Violet had had for many a day that she led the way to the breakfast parlour, Sam, meanwhile, watching beside his master. The doctor's arrival happened soon after, and his testimony confirmed their most favourable hopes. "Mr. Macdougal would be all right in a few days, and would soon be as strong as ever if he would only abstain from the use of stimulants." How very nice but for the little word "*if!*" Violet trembled; she knew how difficult that condition would prove to her poor father; but she felt grateful for the present, and determined, if possible, to take no heed for the morrow. Dr. Malcolm gave orders for the patient to have nourishing soups, tea—everything, in short, he would like, except intoxicating liquors; and left saying, that "as Mr. Macdougal was so much better, he would not return till next morning."

Next morning!

After the doctor's departure Violet insisted on Mr. Graham going home. She said she could not think of encroaching longer on his valuable time; that she would never forget the kindness he had shown in her extremity, and that she was sure God would reward him for it! It being Saturday, Mr. Graham acceded at once to her request, on the understanding that he should be sent for if any unfavourable symptom should appear.

This Violet at once promised, and the minister took his leave.

And now things got somewhat into order at the Castle. The terrified servants once more resumed their work. Mrs. Macdougal breakfasted comfortably, and having strengthened herself, early though it was, with a glass or two of wine, set off for a morning walk; while Violet constituted herself nurse to her father. The day glided peaceably away. Macdougal dozed and slept, and in his few waking moments took off greedily anything that was offered to him. His pulse, too, was more moderate, and but for a certain wild, wandering look in his eye, one would not have known that he was suffering from aught but an ordinary illness; and so the day faded into evening, and evening merged into night, without any perceptible change taking place in the sick man. And Violet, having sent a message to that effect over to the Manse, prepared to pass the night in her father's chamber. Sam was also to sit in an adjoining apartment, to be ready should he be required; but this was merely a precaution, for Violet had no idea his attendance would be necessary.

The night-lamp was trimmed and set. The servants, according to orders, had retired to rest; every sound was hushed in the Castle, save the heavy breathing of Macdougal, which seemed now, in the stillness, to be louder than ever. The wind began to rise, and to sweep round the walls, and through the tops of the trees in wild, mournful gusts, which, ever and again, mingled with the low, long howl of a great watch dog, which had acted as sentry ever since Violet could remember,

and which howl, the superstition of early days creeping over her, Violet shuddered to hear. A cold chill crept over her delicate frame. She drew her cloak closer round her shoulders, stirred the fire gently, lifted her Bible, and, anew committing herself to the care of Him who never slumbers nor sleeps, commenced reading a portion of its sacred pages. She had not read long, however, when, overpowered with sorrow, anxiety, and exhaustion, she fell fast asleep.

How long she slept she knew not—how she wakened she knew not—but when she did open her eyes, it was instantly to close them again, in order to shut out the fearful sight that met her horrified vision. Before her stood her father. In one hand he held a large knife, from which the warm blood was dropping down his night-shirt, and with the other he was endeavouring to waken his daughter by stroking her cheek. His words distinctly fell upon her ear now—

"Violet, dearest, you must wake; there is no time to lose; I have but five minutes to live, dearest, and I—I must send you away before me! Quick, quick! you must say your prayers. Isn't it sad, dearest, to have such a task laid on me—your own father?"

Violet slowly opened her eyes once more. She was sure it must be nothing but a horrid dream. But no! there stood her father, just as she had seen him before, with knife dripping with red, red gore. Seeing her eye fall on the knife, he said, "Don't be frightened, darling, it'll soon be over. The knife is sharp—sharp. Your mother never said a word. It served her right, poor fool—but you, you! quick, quick! say your prayers— my time is up!"

Poor Violet! every sense seemed paralyzed—every drop of blood in her body frozen—the very throbbings of her heart seemed to cease when she saw the awful spectacle, and when she heard his tale of blood. She attempted to scream, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. Feeling that sort of fascination which one is said to feel when under the paw of the lion, she uttered

a hurried ejaculation, and, in answer to her father's husky "Are you ready?" said, as if mechanically, "Yes," and fainted! Strange to say, this seemed to upset the maniac's plans. He flung down the knife, rang the bell violently, and began chafing her cold hands, weeping all the time over his lost darling.

Sam was the first to enter. Rushing up to Violet, whom he thought was dead, he lifted her in his arms like a child, and laid her on her father's bed, the wretched man making no opposition. Then, as the servants came running in, Macdougal seized the huge knife, and brandishing it above his head, yelled out, "Look to her mother! clear the way!" and ere the trembling domestics knew what they were doing, he had passed through the midst of them, and was gone—gone for ever!

But we must draw a veil over the horrors of that bloody night!

Many weeks after this Macdougal's body was found. In a lonely glen lay the almost headless trunk of the proud Laird of Glenrora.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TRAGEDY.

It was a lovely morning in Spring, and the flower garden around the pretty Manse of Glenrora was studded with snowdrops and crocuses, and those earlier flowers which so sweetly herald glowing summer. Within the Manse, a fire was burning brightly in the comfortable breakfast parlour, and though the sun was far up in the heavens, Mr. Graham, in dressing-gown and slippers, still lingered over his coffee, with the newspaper, damp from the fold, in his hand. It was Monday morning, which may account for our minister's indulgence, as he shared those feelings of listlessness and exhaustion so common to his brethren after the anxious duties of the Sabbath were over. Mrs. Graham had finished breakfast some time, and being, like most active housekeepers, always engrossed in one piece of work or another, she had risen from the table and seated herself by the window, the little frock, which for the time occupied all her attention, in her hand. Our old friend Ned was also most industriously employed, trying to erect on the hearth-rug another Tower of Babel, whose top should reach, not Heaven, but the mantelpiece, and in his anxiety to do this he seemed utterly forgetful of the heat of the fire, which was making his little chubby face the colour of a poppy, and was covering with the same vermilion hue his dimpled arms and shoulders. Near him sat a young lady, who was watching his childish attempts with great interest, and who sometimes put out her hand to help to steady an unwilling brick, which would be down, notwithstanding all his efforts to

the contrary. Ned, however, like many other older men, was not particularly grateful for her attentions in this respect, and wished rather to have all the honour of his mighty undertaking to himself.

"That will do, Miss Violey; Neddie do himself, now."

His mamma looked up from her baby's frock. "You should have thanked Miss Violet for helping you, Neddie, dear."

"Thank you, Miss Violey," said the child. "Neddie love 'ou—Neddie give Miss Violey a tiss," and, springing up, he flung his arms round her neck, and pressed his ruby lips to hers.

"You are a good little boy," whispered Violet, clasping him to her breast. "Violet loves Neddie very much."

Mrs. Graham smiled, and resumed her work: she was glad of anything that served to amuse her beloved guest, whose pale, transparent cheek, hollow, darkly-shaded eye, and thin, fragile frame, showed the fearful sufferings she had undergone. Ever since the night that had spread desolation over her house, and since she had been brought, all unconscious as she was, by Mr. Graham's, orders, to his hospitable roof, she had remained there; and though two or three months had passed she was even now little better than an invalid, and it was only two days since she had ventured to leave her room. Nothing could have been more gentle, more kind, more considerate, or more tender than the manner in which this poor orphan girl had been nursed and tended by those kind friends, whom Heaven had so opportunely raised up. For some time it was feared, from the shock the poor girl had received, that her reason was gone for ever; but fortunately these fears were unfounded, and, with returning strength, Violet gradually regained the sweet composure of mind which had hitherto characterised her. One thing, however, was remarkable, she never, even in the most distant way, alluded to her father or mother, or to the place which had been the home of her childhood; indeed she said little to anyone, and that little was chiefly addressed to the sweet children of the Manse. Mrs. Graham hailed

this as a good omen, and always made a point of having one or other beside Violet when she came down stairs.

Mr. Graham, who was still deeply absorbed in his paper, here drew his wife's and Violet's eyes upon him by uttering a sudden exclamation. Throwing down the paper and starting from his seat he was about to leave the room, when recollecting himself he turned back, lifted the paper, and took it with him. His wife rose and followed; she feared he had been taken suddenly ill. Walking into the drawing-room, to which she followed him, he flung himself on a couch and buried his head in his hands. Mrs. Graham approached gently, saying, "Edward, dearest, are you ill?"

"Not ill, dear Margaret; but I am stunned by a paragraph I have seen here," said he, nervously clutching the paper. "I don't think I can show you it; and yet I fear I must. Do you think you would have strength to learn shocking news?"

"I'd have strength for anything, love, if I were sure you were quite well; but the paper—I don't understand."

"It's no use keeping you in suspense, dearest, so read that." And, putting the paper in her hand, he pointed out a paragraph, saying, as he turned to lock the drawing-room door, "It looks as if the vials of God's wrath were to be poured out on that unfortunate family."

The paragraph to which Mr. Graham referred ran as follows:—"Fearful Tragedy in High Life.—It is our painful duty to record one of the saddest tragedies which has taken place for many years, and by which a young nobleman has been hurried to a premature end. The young Marquis of Reston, an officer of Crimean celebrity, and who lost an arm in the dashing charge at Balaklava, has been poisoned by his mistress. Jealousy has been assigned as the motive. The wretched criminal, who is not more than nineteen years of age, after administering the poison to her lover, swallowed a portion herself; but, from some cause or other, it did not produce the expected effect. On the death of the Marquis, the poor creature confessed at once that she had given him laudanum, stating that

she had taken as much herself and that she expected to have died before him—but that it did not much signify, as she knew she had not many days to live. For the rest, she declined making any statement, saying, 'God knew that she had had her own share of sorrow, but that it would soon now be at an end.' Her Christian name is Rose. She will give no other, assigning as her reason 'that she has already sufficiently disgraced her family, and she is determined not to bring farther ignominy upon them.' It was a heart-rending scene, that of separation from the dead body of the Marquis. She kissed his cold hands, and his livid lips again, again, and again: she wailed and wept, 'Oh! that she had died with him?' Then, turning to the authorities, she asked 'If she might not be allowed to die beside him?' On being answered, of course, in the negative, she fell into a fearful fit of hysterics, and in this state was conveyed to the nearest hospital and put under medical care. The physicians confirm her statement 'that she has not many days to live.' Public sympathy runs high in favour of the poor criminal—so young—so broken-hearted, and so beautiful; and while no one can justify, under any circumstances, the awful crime of which she has been guilty, yet, were the veil lifted from her dark history, we fear we would find that she has been more sinned against than sinning. Report says that the Marquis was about to lead to the altar a lady of rank and great beauty, well known in fashionable circles."

While Mrs. Graham was reading the above painful paragraph, her face became deadly pale—a cold sickness came over her, and but for her husband's encircling arm she would have fallen back on the sofa. After a silence of a few minutes she ejaculated, "Poor Rose, and is this thy end? so beautiful, so brilliant, so accomplished!" And as her memory recalled the merry happy child she had taught for so many years, bitter tears coursed down her cheeks. Her husband, who sympathised with all her feelings, and who had been for some time silently sharing her sorrows, at last broke the silence by saying—"Violet must never know of this!"

"Never!" sobbed Mrs. Graham, "It would kill her!"

"Poor girl, she has indeed had a bitter cup to drink, we must not add one drop to that bitter draught," said Mr. Graham.

"No, no; but can nothing be done for her poor wretch sister?" asked his wife in an anxious voice.

"I fear she is dying, dearest; and it is almost well it should be so; otherwise," he lowered his voice as he spoke, "otherwise you know, dearest, her life is forfeited to the laws of her country."

Mrs. Graham shuddered. But to think of her dying in a hospital alone, uncared for, a criminal among strangers, with none to speak a word of consolation to her—with none to say to her, "Rose, Jesus died for the chief of sinners—with none to point her to the Cross, to the dying thief—with none to say, "His blood can save the vilest—even you!" And Mrs. Graham once more buried her head in her hands and wept like a child.

"Dearest, do try and compose yourself," said her husband, tenderly; "I have thought of all that, and I have made up my mind to go to her, though it should be only to see her die. There shall at least be one Christian friend to lay her young head in a sinner's grave. Poor Rose! Retribution has indeed followed swift in her case. It is scarcely two years since I interposed to endeavour to save her from the course of ruin on which she was about to enter. Little did I think that my sad predictions were to be so soon verified. I can see her now as she stood, so proudly, so defiantly beautiful, and repelled all my proposals to return to her parents with the utmost scorn. Poor, poor Rose!"

"When do you propose going?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"Now—immediately; there is no time to lose," replied her husband; "I only fear I will be too late."

"How kind—how like yourself! May God speed you on your errand of mercy, dearest!"

Mr. Graham's few preparations were soon made, and he set out with the afternoon coach in time to catch the night-mail from Glasgow to London.

Before leaving he cautioned Mrs. Graham not to allow a single newspaper to be opened in the house before his return, and as a blind to Violet he spent some time in the sitting-room, talking with apparent cheerfulness, and he even tried a game at romps with little Ned, in the course of which he told him, 'That papa was going to London, and asked what he would bring for his own little boy?'

The *ruse* was so eminently successful that in Neddie's perplexity what to choose from among the many wonderful things which he knew London must contain, Violet came to his assistance, with suggestions of various toys—so unconscious was she, poor girl, of the real cause of his papa's journey.

We need not dwell on the incidents of that journey—on the rubicund-faced, fur-capped traveller who shared the compartment of the carriage with him; who occupied the cosiest corner, and who, mid his piles of wraps and rugs, had evidently studied the art of making himself comfortable. Nor need we dwell on the fact that more than once the generous stranger, drawing from his pocket a bottle covered with basket-work, with an ingeniously contrived drinking cup attached, did not fail to request our minister to take a little whisky, just to keep out the night air, assuring him that it was the real mountain dew, and that nothing like it, he was sorry to say, could be got in England; nor is it of much importance for our readers to know that, after his kind offer had been politely declined the second time, the rubicund stranger became rather crusty, and wondered, in an audible soliloquy, what the world was coming to? and what could make folks give themselves such airs? For his part he did not think people knew common civility now-a-days, and so on; all of which, in other circumstances would have amused Mr. Graham not a little, but his mind, pre-occupied with the gloomy duty before him, scarcely dwelt for an instant on the insinuations of his crusty neighbour. But, perhaps, it might be as well to mention that, though the red-nosed stranger failed

with Mr. Graham, he did not fail with the guard, who was but too glad to quaff off a good draught of his much-lauded mountain dew, to the imminent risk of the lives and limbs of the passengers committed to his care. Talk of railway accidents! the marvel is, not that they are so many, but that they are so few, considering the absurd practice that so commonly prevails of passengers treating guards on duty to stout, to brandy, or to whisky, as the case may be.

But to return to Mr. Graham. The journey on this occasion was made in safety, and once in London he lost no time in prosecuting the object of his expedition. Having ascertained, while swallowing a hurried breakfast, the name and locality of the hospital to which poor Rose had been conveyed, he procured a cab and hastened thither. On inquiry he had the melancholy satisfaction of learning that she was still in life, though sinking fast. Announcing himself as the minister of the parish in Scotland where she was brought up, he was at once admitted, and, accompanied by a house-surgeon, conducted to the ward where the young criminal lay dying. Mr. Graham's heart beat so quick and loud as he approached the bed, that he put his hand upon it to endeavour to still its throbbings. At last he stood close by the bed of the dying girl, but at first he had some difficulty in recognising the wan countenance, the wasted features, the thin pinched lips, and the hollow sunken eye, where grief and sorrow had imprinted their dark traces; and it was with a feeling of inexpressible relief that he thought, after all, he might be mistaken. But no, there was no mistake; for, as he stood silently contemplating the unconscious form before him, a slight change passed over her face, that subtle, mysterious something called expression, which so strongly develops the likeness of individual families; and that change recalled to his mind most vividly the Rose of other days. Yes, there she lay, a wreck on the ocean of life, with the last sands of her existence fast running away, and as Mr. Graham stood and gazed, thought what she was, and

what she might have been, he turned aside his head to conceal his emotion. The surgeon, who had been standing near him, at last broke silence, by saying in a subdued voice, "This is a very sad case, sir; the poor girl there does not belong to the ordinary class of criminals."

"No, no," said Mr. Graham, impetuously; "she was deceived, betrayed, ruined by a villain, who took advantage of a father's hospitality to rob him of his daughter. But I will not speak of *him*—he has gone, I fear, with all his sins unforgiven, to meet his Judge. But her! certain am I that nothing but the most heartless treatment could have driven her to the fearful crime she has committed. May I ask, has she been long in this unconscious state?"

"Oh, no," replied the surgeon, "only since midnight; till then she was in a high fever, and quite delirious; her present state proceeds from absolute exhaustion. In all probability she will be dead before midnight."

"Poor Rose!" sighed our minister in very bitterness of spirit. "May I ask if in her delirium she said anything which might tend to throw light on her past history?"

"Very little, sir," replied the surgeon. "At first, she talked incessantly about the murdered marquis, sometimes weeping and bemoaning his death, at other times calling upon him, in most piteous accents, to keep his solemn promise and make her his wife. Now, she would speak of nights of weeping and days of remorse, and then she would cry aloud for brandy."

"Ah," said Mr. Graham, "brandy has been the ruin of her house! But I beg pardon, pray go on, sir."

"It has been the ruin of hundreds besides her's. Ah, sir! one requires to be placed in a position like mine to know something of the dreadful effects of drinking upon the system, and the fearful forms of disease occasioned by it. But to return to this unhappy girl. Within the last forty-eight hours her wandering thoughts have turned more to what seemed to have been her home, and to the associates of her early days. She has several times, in most affectionate tones, addressed some one as Violet—spoken to her of childish sports—implored her to love

her, to forgive and pardon her, and she would never leave her more. But I must ask you to excuse me, sir," said the surgeon, drawing out his watch, "I must go my rounds. The nurse here (pointing to a clean respectable looking woman standing at a little distance behind them) will be glad to tell you anything she can of your poor friend."

"Just one word before you go," said Mr. Graham. "Is there any chance whatever of consciousness returning before death?"

"I should say every chance," answered the surgeon; "it may be for a brief period, but still we find that it generally does so."

"Then, with your permission, I shall remain," said Mr. Graham.

"Certainly, if you choose. Nurse will show you a comfortable parlour where you can wait, and she will call you the moment any change is perceptible."

Mr. Graham thanked him, and the surgeon withdrew.

Our minister lingered for some time by the bedside of the dying girl, breathing a silent prayer to the Good Shepherd that even now, at the eleventh hour, He would bring this poor, bruised, wandering sheep into His heavenly sheep-fold; and then, taking another long sad look at the faded form before him, he proceeded to the room pointed out by the nurse, Mr. Graham reminding her to call him on the slightest appearance of any change.

The hours dragged slowly past. Wearied in body and saddened in spirit, Mr. Graham lay down upon a couch and tried to sleep; but it was of no use, sleep would not visit his eyes. He took up a newspaper; it was filled with the most exaggerated accounts of the crime which had been lately committed, and with the most monstrous statements of Rose's previous history. Of course it was just such a subject as penny-a-liners always contrive to make the most of, and just such a subject as the morbid craving of a large class of readers loves to devour.

Mr. Graham laid down the paper in disgust. He was quite shocked to see the unfortunate guilty creature

blackened into a courtezan, who wished to lure her high-born admirer into a vile *méssalliance;* and, failing in that, had revenged herself by poisoning him! Quite bad enough was the case in its naked plain simplicity.

About noon the nurse appeared with a basin of soup, which she begged Mr Graham to take, saying, 'she was quite sure it would do his honour good.' On inquiring for Rose, she said, "The young lady is no better. Indeed, she never will be better in this world, sir. Poor young thing, she's dyin' of a broken heart, sir; I don't think I could have been more sorry for my own daughter, sir;" and the good woman lifted her apron to her eyes.

"She talked a great deal about home last night, did she not?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and so beautiful," replied the nurse. "You should have heard her, sir; it put me in mind of our clergyman. I never heard any one speaking so beautiful, except him; perhaps you know him," she continued, a new idea suddenly entering her brain. "He is called Mr. Irvin—everybody knows him."

Mr. Graham answered briefly "that he did not know him, but that he had often heard of him;" adding, "but surely his chapel is a long way from this?"

"Oh! yes, sir, but that's nothing; I would go twenty miles to hear him, sir, for there's not his like in London."

Mr. Graham made no reply. The good woman was evidently disposed to be garrulous, and he dreaded that he might possibly detain her from her duties. His silence recalled the nurse's mind to her charge, and saying, "But pardon me, sir, I must go." She dropped a curtsey, and left the room.

The shades of evening were darkening the apartment, when Mr. Graham heard a knock at the door, and approaching it, received the hasty summons, "Please, sir, the doctor says you must come directly."

Mr. Graham followed without speaking, and in a few minutes stood once more by the bedside of the dying girl.

A very great change had, indeed, passed over her since our minister last stood there. Thin though her cheek

was, a soft warm flush—soft as the reflection left by the sun just set, painted that cheek with beauty; her eye was brighter even than it was in days of yore; while masses of her rich auburn hair fell over her marble brow and snowy throat. Yes, there was—there could be no mistake now—Rose lay before him, revealed in more than mortal beauty!

As Mr. Graham came forward, the surgeon, whom he had seen in the morning, and who had just been feeling the dying girl's pulse, whispered, "I am glad you are here, sir; she is quite conscious, and I am sure it will give her satisfaction to see any one that she knows." And thus saying, he made way for him to advance.

"She is very much changed; may it not be for the better, doctor?" asked Mr. Graham, as he approached.

The surgeon shook his head. "It is the flame in the socket—the last gleam of expiring nature; there is absolutely no hope."

Our minister breathed a prayer for Divine guidance as he went close up to her bed, and then waiting a few minutes, to give her time to look at him, he took her little hand in his, and said, in a low voice, "Rose! do you know me?"

She looked up full in the face that bent over her, and whispered, "Is it you, Reston?" A shade of unutterable grief crossed her face; immediately after, however, as she added, "How stupid! I forgot." And passing her hand with an effort across her brow, she looked at him once more; and then a ray of sweet intelligence beaming in her eye, she said in a tone that was scarcely audible, "This is very kind, Mr. Graham; *you* are the last person I had any right to expect. Oh! had I but followed your counsel, I had not—" she paused, she became agitated, and her poor limbs shook under the bed-clothes. Mr. Graham felt inclined to retire from her sight, when, as if interpreting his intention, she whispered, "Pray, pray do not leave me." Her tones were so pleading, so plaintive, that they went to Mr. Graham's heart like a knife, and it was with a great effort to be calm that he said,

"No dearest Rose; I will stay as long as you wish me." She thanked him with a bright smile. After some time she asked, in a broken voice, for Violet. Mr. Graham assured her that she was well, and told her one or two little incidents of her sister that he knew would interest her. At this moment the nurse approached and put a little wine and water to her lips; she pushed it gently aside with her hand, saying, "Water—cold water, please! Ah, Mr. Graham, had I never taken anything else, I should never have been the loathsome thing I am—loathsome in the sight of God—loathsome in the sight of man—saved from the gibbet only by death!" She groaned. It was too much for her feeble body, and she lay as if already dead. In a few minutes she spoke again, asking for her parents. Mr. Graham, in the gentlest possible manner, told her they were dead. On hearing this, she almost sprang from the bed, exclaiming with fearful energy, "Have I killed them too!"

"No, no, dearest Rose, you are guiltles of their blood."

"But my disobedience—my—."

"They felt your disobedience, Rose; but rest assured you had nothing to do with their death."

"Thank God for that; I have enough, and more than enough to account for, without that."

"Rose," said Mr. Graham, solemnly, "we have all too much to account for. Who should stand if the Lord should mark iniquity? But we know how forgiveness may be found; we know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin. Have you thought of *that*, Rose?"

"I have thought of that, but I am beyond the pale; there is no forgiveness for me; and my only hope is, Mr. Graham, that perhaps, after all, there is no God." She spoke with fearful calmness, but she sighed deeply.

"Vain hope! Oh, Rose, your life is ebbing fast away. I conjure you now, *now* to deceive yourself no longer, to flee to Jesus, ere it be too late. He can save the chief of sinners."

"Not me, I tell you," she said impetuously, "I am beyond the pale!"

"Rose, do you not remember the thief on the cross, or the woman that was a sinner?"

"Both better, far better than me!" sighed the dying girl; but her cheek was becoming paler every instant, the cold dews of death were settling on her marble brow, and the hand which Mr. Graham was still holding in his own, was becoming colder and colder.

It would soon be too late.

"Rose, dearest Rose, Jesus loves you. He is waiting *now* to receive you! Oh, go to Him now! Wash His feet with your tears." Mr. Graham paused, for the poor girl had fainted. At first he thought that all was over; but the surgeon discovered that life had not fled. Mr. Graham offered up a most fervent prayer for the soul of the poor outcast, the little group round the bedside joining in his devotions. When he concluded, they drew near to the bed, and Rose once more, and for the last time, opened her eyes. A look of peace stole over her face—she held out her hand to Mr. Graham, and, on his clasping it in his own, she smiled a radiant smile, and whispered, "Thank you!" and then, pressing her tapered fingers in his hand, said, "Jesus died." The words were just audible, and, closing her eyes, she heaved a deep sigh, and her wearied spirit was at rest.

Mr. Graham was still holding the cold little hand; he now released his hold, and laid it gently upon her breast, cut off a long tress of her golden hair; kissed her damp forehead, and left with the surgeon, whilst the nurse performed the last offices to the now soulless clay.

Rose was buried on the following day. Mr Graham acted as chief mourner. He kept his promise, for 'he laid her young head in the grave,' not without hope of a glorious resurrection.

On his return home, Mr. Graham thought it necessary to inform Violet of her poor sister's death. The intelligence was broken to her as gently as possible, and both her friends were relieved to find that she bore it better than they had dared to expect. And when, a few months after, her strength had somewhat returned, and she left

them to spend a short time with a cousin of her father's, all anxiety on her account was gone.

In an obscure corner of a metropolitan churchyard may be seen a grassy mound, surmounted by a plain grey slab, bearing the following inscription:—

ROSE,

AGED NINETEEN.

'The way of transgressors is hard.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME.

At last peace was proclaimed! After a struggle in which three great nations had exerted every energy; and in which the resources of at least two of them were exhausted, the great fortress of Sebastopol—the stronghold of Russian strength on the Black Sea—was evacuated, and the power of that empire so crippled, that it would be impossible for her to make any aggression upon Turkey for many years to come.

The great object of the war being thus accomplished, our weary soldiers contemplated with pleasure the prospect of seeing their native land, and the friends who, during many a sleepless night, and many an anxious day, had watched for their return.

The Thunderer had steamed into Southampton harbour with her complement of troops from the Crimea, and among others, a detachment of the — Highlanders, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon. The bustle, the noise, and the confusion on board the steamer, as the troops prepared to land, would fairly baffle description, and it was late in the afternoon of a beautiful day in May, ere they were in readiness to disembark. The quay and the sides of the streets through which our gallant soldiers had to pass, were lined with hourly-increasing crowds, anxious to give our British heroes a British cheer of welcome, while many of their wives, friends, and sweethearts had come, some longer, some shorter distances, for the pleasure of setting their eyes as soon as possible on those manly forms whom many of them had scarcely hoped to see again. But there, they come

at last, with music, and acclamation and cheers, with waving of handkerchiefs, with scattering of flowers, with firm step and martial bearing, they come! Many of them wearing marks of flesh-wounds, many of them looking ten years older than when they left, from exposure to Crimean climate and the hardships of life in the camp, the field, and the trenches; but all full of the same brave courage with which they stormed the heights of Alma, or dashed over the open space, scoured by shot and grape, to attack the fatal Redan! They come! the cheeks of England's fairest daughters glow with rapture; tears of joy drop from the orphan's eye, as she beholds the brother of her youth, and the heart of the widowed mother sings for joy as she feasts her eye on her manly son! while who can tell the happiness concentrated in the bosom of that sweet young wife as, lifting her chubby boy in her arms, and holding him high above her head, she whispers, with lips that tremble with delight, "Yes, darling, that's papa?"

Among the officers there was one who, though sharing the joy which all must feel on revisiting in safety their native land, after passing through scenes of danger and bloodshed, yet felt his breast filled with an irrepressible sadness. For him no mother was watching with tender eye—for him no brother's grasp of welcome, no sister's embrace of love, was in store—for him no young heart was bounding with rapture; and Sir Ronald sighed as he heard his brother officers talking and laughing of their families and friends whom they expected so soon to see, for he felt he was alone in the world. As a soldier, Sir Ronald had been eminently fortunate. Though not more than twenty-two years of age, he had already got his company, and he was already known in his regiment as one of the most promising young men in the army. Distinguished for his bravery, for his clear judgment and cool head in the midst of the greatest danger, he was a man fited to command; while his gentle, yet firm temper was well calculated to win the affections of those under him Notwithstanding his success, however, and

his future prospects, he felt at the present moment so utterly friendless, that he would gladly have exchanged places with the little drummer, who was exulting in the prospect of seeing his mother and trying to discover her form among the thousands congregated on the quays. But Sir Ronald's mind was too well balanced to allow him long to indulge in unnecessary grief. In endeavouring to share in and sympathise with the universal joy he found that he became happy himself, and he had soon cause to regret giving way to any feeling of sadness at all. For no sooner had he sprung ashore than his hand was firmly grasped, and a familiar voice whispered in his ear, "Thank Heaven! Safe and sound! God bless you my boy!" Yes, it was no other than M'Nab—his old, his tried, his faithful friend—his father, mother, all the relations he had in the world stood beside him, holding his boy's hand still clasped in one of his, while he dashed away the tears, which would come unbidden to his eyes, and roll down his withered cheeks. Sir Ronald's heart smote him. He alone in the world! He was rather inclined to question *now* if the world contained a man blessed with such a true friend as he was. Their interview was necessarily brief, but in those few moments the love of a lifetime was concentrated, and thoughts too big for utterance expressed in a few hasty, incoherent sentences found a better interpreter in the language of the eye and in the pressure of the hand. The troops were falling into marching order, so Sir Ronald, having promised to spend his first hours of leisure at M'Nab's lodgings, bade him good-bye with a cheerful voice.

Now came the march through the crowded streets, and while passing through one of the principal squares, a little incident occurred which gave Sir Ronald's mind a new direction. Whether by accident or design, a beautiful bouquet, composed of exquisite roses encircled with laurel, fell exactly at the feet of the handsome young officer. Picking it up, with a soldier's gallantry, he looked and bowed in the direction from whence it came, placing it, at the same time, in his breast. In doing so,

his eye fell on a beautiful young girl, whose cheek, rivalling the hue of her own roses, betrayed the secret. Sir Ronald bowed once more; but though he could not help contemplating the lovely creature with admiration, still it was not the fair sweet face of his dreams, and which now, strange to say, had assumed in his memory a holier, sadder expression, than the Violet whom he had met for so short a time, and yet long enough to give a colour to his whole future existence.

After the duties of the day were over, Sir Ronald obtained leave from his commanding officer to spend the evening with a friend, and hasted to the spot appointed for their meeting by M'Nab. It was a large and comfortable "Temperance Hotel," where friends might meet and sit, and sip their coffee till past midnight, without fear of breaking their heads, their health, or the laws of the realm.

M'Nab had evidently been watching, for, though he held a newspaper in his hand, he sprang to his feet and rushed towards the door the instant Sir Ronald entered. Holding out his hand, he said, "True to your word, my boy; I was beginning to fear that, after all, you might find it impossible to come to me to-night."

The young officer smiled as he said, "You see I have made it possible, and, what's better, I have arranged to stay with you all night."

M'Nab was delighted. He still held Sir Ronald's hand, and he now commenced examining him from top to toe with an expression of pleasure and pride.

"Dear me, boy, how you have grown," he exclaimed at last, after he had gazed upon him some time with looks of the utmost affection, "Why, you must be above six feet."

"Not above, I assure you," laughed Sir Ronald, "positively I think I am rather too good a mark for the bullet already, and have no wish to be a better. I have had some rather hair-breadth escapes, I can tell you."

"Ah, yes!" sighed M'Nab; but in his opinion this was no time for sadness, so, clasping Sir Ronald's

muscular arm, he continued in a cheerful tone, "And you've got stout, too, I declare. The salt pork and the hard work seem to have agreed with you, my lad!"

"Well, I don't know; as for the hard work, there certainly was plenty of it going, but as for the salt pork—that's all stuff. At the outset we were undoubtedly exposed to some little hardships which, had they been foreseen, would most certainly have been prevented; but afterwards, I don't believe there ever was an army belonging to England or any other country so well cared for, both in camp and hospital. The great marvel with me often was, how from twenty thousand to thirty thousand men were so well and so regularly fed, considering we were in an enemy's country. Pshaw! I have no patience with a grumbling soldier—does he expect to feed on turtle soup, fricassee, and roasted chicken?"

M'Nab smiled. "You are just the stuff for a soldier, at any rate, my lad! But I am forgetting—come and sit down;" and M'Nab pointed to a large easy chair, which he had wheeled close to the bright fire, for though it was May, and the sun warm during the day, yet the chill of the evening made the genial warmth of the fire very acceptable. Sir Ronald accepted his friend's invitation, and flung himself back in the soft spring-bottomed chair with a feeling of luxury to which he had been long a stranger. After seeing him so comfortably seated, M'Nab laid his hand upon the bell, saying, "Now, my boy, which do you prefer—tea or coffee?"

"It's quite the same to me, thank you," replied Sir Ronald; "but what would you say to a good tumbler of whisky toddy—there's nothing so natural to Highlanders as their own mountain dew—eh! my old friend?"

Old M'Nab started, changed colour, looked sadly into the face of his young companion. For some minutes he did not speak. Was it possible that his long-cherished hopes were to be so suddenly destroyed?—was it possible that the handsome, healthful, promising young man before him was already on the road which had led to the

ruin of his father? M'Nab sighed bitterly as he thought how possible it was, and how many as good, happy, healthful, and handsome as he, had fallen into that soul-destroying snare!

Sir Ronald, astonished at M'Nab's long silence, looked up with a merry smile, saying, "Eh, old friend?" But he was startled with the deadly hue of the venerable man's face; and still more when, in a voice which seemed to bear no resemblance to his own, the old man asked, in a broken agitated tone—

"Have you, then, forgotten your vow?"

Sir Ronald was cut to the heart; he little thought that his little bit of pleasantry, meant as a harmless joke, would have so affected his dear old friend. He rose—he took the hand of M'Nab—he clasped it in both of his own—he fixed his large, full beautiful eyes on his old friend's face, and said, with tones full of emotion, "Forgive me, my true, my best of friends, my protector, my more than father—forgive me the pain I have so unintentionally, so unwillingly caused you. Forget my vow! never, so help me God!" But it was some time before M'Nab could realise his words; the shock had been so great, and the poor old man had been plunged so suddenly into such overwhelming sorrow, that it required Sir Ronald's repeated and most solemn asseverations to convince him of the contrary. It was most touching to see the tender and affectionate assiduity with which Sir Ronald endeavoured to assuage the fears which he so bitterly regretted having created in the bosom of the kind old man. By degrees M'Nab became more composed, and at last he said, "I will believe you, my boy; it was foolish of me to fancy, on such slight grounds, that you had belied all I had ever known of you; it was foolish."

"Well! its all right now, my own father, is it not?" said Sir Ronald, interrupting him. "I, alone, am to blame, with my foolish joke; how bitterly I regret it."

"Yes, it's all right, my boy; and thankful am I to the great God that it is so. Had it been otherwise, it

would have brought my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. May you, my boy, never know anything of the remorse and the bitterness of spirit that I have endured on account of that accursed drink."

Sir Ronald rang the bell. "We have forgotten tea," said he smiling; "I think you prefer it, don't you?"

"Yes, by all means, let's have it," said M'Nab, making an effort to appear cheerful.

Tea came, and with tea came cheerful chat and pleasant recollections of other days and stories of the campaign, and in the midst of it Sir Ronald, putting his hand in his breast, brought out his mother's Bible with the bullet fixed in it as it was found on the night of the Alma. Sir Ronald had mentioned his miraculous escape in a letter to M'Nab, but it was a very different thing to behold the Bible, bullet and all, with his own eyes. He bowed his head in gratitude to 'Him in whose hands are the issues of life,' and said, "Well, my boy, God's ways are wonderful. If I had not seen this with my own eyes I could scarcely have believed it; but, let me tell you, I would have been happier if you had fallen on those same bloody heights in honour and glory, than to have you by my side to-day, if you had forsaken the paths of virtue, or learned to love and seek intoxicating liquors."

"I believe you, my worthy friend, and think that I myself would have preferred the honourable death to either of the dishonourable alternatives you mention. But, speaking of drink, I may tell you that I sometimes think that if I had gone to the East without warning of its ruinous results, and without any prepossession against it, the scenes I constantly witnessed there—the fearfully demoralizing effect I saw it produce on our men, and the many deaths by cholera, which invariably carried off first the hardest drinkers, would have deterred me for ever from becoming a drinker. Only fancy, two thousand four hundred soldiers, on one occasion, reported drunk at watch-setting! I well believe that drunkenness was a worse enemy to many of our poor soldiers than all the Russians in the world!"

"I have no doubt of it, my boy. Of one thing, at least, I am certain—that it is more fatal to our nation than war and pestilence combined; and though I think I begin to see some good results from the energetic labours of our philanthropists, still one's heart sinks to see the magnitude of the evil and the weakness of the instrumentality brought to bear upon and overcome it."

"Oh! but we must never despair," said Sir Ronald. "What would become of the 'forlorn hope,' if it were to lose heart? Rest assured, my worthy friend, that faith in success is the sure omen of victory; and, besides, *we* must never forget that God chooses often the feeble things in this world to confound the mighty. Up, then! and let us attack the impregnable citadel in the midst of us, and, under God, we will demolish the stronghold, raze the walls to the foundation, and drive the demon of drunkenness from our land for ever!"

M'Nab smiled at his boy's enthusiasm. "You're the stuff for an abstainer, as well as a soldier!" he said at last; "but you don't know the difficulties. You are, let me see, just twenty-two, and I am verging on threescore years and ten, and during my long life I have not failed to observe how deeply rooted the customs of drinking are in the very vitals of society. The peer drinks his rare wines—the peasant his beer; the minister and the elder drink their toddy—the outcast does the same, but only to a greater extent; medical men drink; and should one of their patients, convinced of the evils attending our drinking customs, become an abstainer, his medical adviser shakes his head, tells him that it won't do; that his constitution requires a stimulant, and that he must, at least, take a glass or so of Bass's bitter ale at dinner, just to aid digestion, or a glass of port to strengthen him, or a glass of sherry to do—Heaven knows what! Now, what in the world can a small band of abstainers do against a combination like that?"

"Do as you have done," said Sir Ronald. "If each would do his utmost to influence *one*, and bring him under the power of Temperance principles, you would

wonder what rapid progress would be made. I myself have been the means of inducing a few of my men to enlist under the Temperance banner, and I know these men are already exercising an incalculable power for good among their companions and friends."

"It does my heart good to hear you say so, my boy. I think you must take command of the 'forlorn hope,' after all!"

"Most willingly—the more so as I think it will prove anything but a 'forlorn hope!'"

M'Nab smiled. After a pause of a few minutes, he said, "Oh, by the way, I had almost forgotten to tell you a piece of news, which I'm sure will interest you—the old place is once more in the market."

"What, Glenrora!" exclaimed Sir Ronald, starting from his seat; "how I wish I could buy it!"

Others could wish that too, my boy," said M'Nab, sadly, "but I fear it's absolutely impossible; even were we to attempt raising money on the security of the land, the interest would amount to a large sum of itself."

"Oh! it's no use talking about it, I know," said Sir Ronald; "but only it would have been so nice to have been able to call the place which has been for so many generations in our family, one's own."

"Yes, but——"

"Pray say no more about it," interrupted Sir Ronald. "The thing is impossible. But what is the reason of the estate being sold?"

"Oh! it's a sad story," replied M'Nab, "though I know little about it, save that the proprietor, Mr. Macdougal, lost the great part of his fortune; that he went mad with drink, and that, after murdering his wife, he took away his own life."

"How shocking! how horrible!" exclaimed Sir Ronald. "And his family?" he asked in an indifferent tone, making a great effort to conceal his agitation.

"Turned out very ill, if I understand right; a daughter, in particular, nearly broke her father's heart; she eloped with a dissolute nobleman, and came to an untimely end."

"A daughter!" broke in Sir Ronald. "Had Mr. Macdougal *two* daughters?"

"I don't know," said M'Nab. "I rather think not."

"You don't mean to say so," exclaimed Sir Ronald indignantly. "I would give the lie to the whole world should it say so. You must be mistaken; that sweet girl we met in the Manse would never become the paramour of any man or nobleman under heaven."

"I may be mistaken, Sir Ronald," said M'Nab calmly, for he was alarmed at his young friend's impetuosity, which he could not understand. "I may be mistaken, but I cannot see what particular interest you can have in either Macdougal or his family."

"Oh, I have no particular interest in them." But Sir Ronald sighed, and looked straight in the fire while he said so.

The whole thing was an absolute mystery to M'Nab, who had quite forgotten the meeting with Violet till Sir Ronald recalled it to his memory, and who never anticipated that the acquaintance of an hour or two could have produced such an impression on his young friend; forgetting that there are circumstances which render the heart peculiarly susceptible, and that Sir Ronald's visit to the home of his childhood, with all its early associations—that the account he had got of his father's death, on his visit to Loch Rora—were all events calculated to subdue the heart and soften the feelings; and that the probability is that if Sir Ronald had met at that time one possessed of not a tithe of Violet's beauty or mental qualifications, he would as readily have placed her in the shrine of his heart as he did the peerless Violet.

We have said that old M'Nab could not understand Sir Ronald's impetuosity. By degrees, however, light began to dawn upon him, as he gazed at his boy, whose face wore an anxious, abstracted air, and whose eyes were still fixed vacantly on the glowing embers. Though M'Nab had never married, he had been, like most men in the world, once in love; and though the young woman to whom he was engaged had died, and he continued

faithful to her memory, this made him none the less able to sympathise with Sir Ronald. M'Nab wondered now how he had been so stupid, and so long in guessing the secret of his young friend's impetuosity, for he could well remember the time when he would have fought, single-handed, the whole of the young men in the village, if they had dared to cast an aspersion on his "bonny Jean." After a silence which lasted some time, and during which each was busied with his own thoughts, M'Nab said—"I wish, my boy, I could give you certain information concerning Mr. Macdougal's family, and especially of that sweet girl—Miss Violet, I think they called her."

"Yes, Violet is her name," said Sir Ronald. "I fear you will think me very foolish, but I would willingly travel to the end of the world, at the present moment, to learn what has become of her."

"I could guess as much," said M'Nab, smiling; "but, as for being foolish, I suppose you are not more so than most men are at some period or other of their lives; indeed I question if there is any folly about it, for certain am I that there is no more sure protection against the temptations of youth than a virtuous attachment."

"I have often felt something of that kind," said Sir Ronald, "and in moments of trial and danger her sweet face has ever shone upon me, and been the guiding star of my existence."

"Well, my boy, I can understand all that, and I can only pray that God may make your path clear before you, and make the object of your affection worthy of your choice."

M'Nab spoke so solemnly, that Sir Ronald did not reply; he felt it a relief, however, to have no secret from his friend, and together they chatted briskly on various subjects. Neither of them once thought of going to bed, and were astonished, so swiftly had the time passed, when morning dawned, and the light began to glimmer through the closed windows. After breakfasting together they parted, with many a farewell, Sir Ronald to the barracks, and M'Nab to return to Scotland.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING—THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

It was by no means a fine evening when Sir Ronald left the Castle and wended his way to the house of his friend, Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon, in Moray-place, where he had promised to dine. It was November, and such November weather as can be met with in perfection only in our climate. The streets were wet and greasy with slushy mud; a thick, wetting, though almost imperceptible rain was falling, and a dense chill fog, from the Frith of Forth, enveloped the city and its suburbs in its misty embrace. Fortunately, the distance was short, or Sir Ronald would have been tempted to have called for a cab—a mode of conveyance our young officer had no particular fancy for—and soon he stood in the comfortable, brilliantly-lighted hall of his hospitable friend, rendered all the more agreeable from comparison with the gloomy street without. Before ushering Sir Ronald into the drawing-room, a few words of explanation may be necessary to the reader. After various changes from one garrison town to another, the Highlanders were at last quartered in Edinburgh, and as it was rumoured that their stay in that city was to be of some duration, the lady of Colonel Gordon, leaving their small property in the north of Scotland, where she and her children had resided during her husband's absence in the East, took a house in town, for the purpose of being near her husband, and permitting him to see as much of his children as possible. It was only a few days since they arrived in town, and the Colonel had invited Sir Ronald, for whom he had never ceased to entertain a most sincere friendship,

to dine with him on the evening of which we write. The invitation had been given quite in an off-hand sort of way. "No state—no ceremony, my young friend; I want you just to come and see my wife and bairns, and tell me what you think of them."

And so Sir Ronald went; and the tall, respectable, middle-aged footman, looking Scotch all over, from the red hair to the high cheek bones, opening the drawing-room door, announced in loud tones, and with a strong Scotch accent, "Sir Ronald Macdonald!" The announcement created some little stir in the small party assembled within. The Colonel came forward to welcome his guest, and introduced him at once to his wife and three young girls, his daughters, just entering their teens, and who (they had not yet made their *début*) always dined late when papa was at home, which mamma, in justification of the practice, said "was so seldom." Mrs. Gordon was a remarkably handsome, lady-like woman, and Sir Ronald was not at all surprised that her husband should feel proud of her; and his daughters—but, sooth to say, the young officer had no eyes for them, these same eyes being constantly wandering to the form of a young lady, attired in deepest mourning, who, at a small table, was bending over a portfolio of engravings which Mrs. Gordon had that day purchased. From her position, her face was invisible to our hero; but the figure, the bend of the graceful neck, the very droop of the golden curl, all seemed dearly familiar to him; but it was impossible, and so he endeavoured to enter into a somewhat lively conversation with the eldest Miss Gordon, who was giving her opinion of Edinburgh men, manners, and things, with a *naïve* simplicity which would, in other circumstances, have charmed Sir Ronald. But now—"Well, certainly he was stupid, that young officer, and papa had said he was so clever; she could not understand it at all." He answered all her questions in monosyllables, and generally said "No" when he should have said "Yes," and *vicé versâ*. And then those eyes—fine eyes they were too—were always wandering about

the room. Missie Gordon was mortified. In her own opinion she was quite a young lady, and she was determined to be at the bottom of the mystery, for mystery it must be, she being quite sure that a man with such a handsome face could not possibly be stupid. To all such mysteries young ladies fancy they possess a never-failing key, and Miss Gordon, determined to try the power of hers, so abruptly changing the subject, with a silvery laugh she exclaimed, "Pray, Sir Ronald, are you in love?"

"Yes, no,—I believe I am!" stammered our young officer, who, soldier though he was, actually quailed beneath the merry glances of the young lady, while the warm blood rushed to his very temples. At this moment, fortunately for Sir Ronald, Colonel Gordon came to his relief, saying, "I am afraid my mischievous Maggie is too much for you, Sir Ronald. Come, let me have the pleasure of introducing you to another importation, a cousin of my wife's, only seven times removed. I have no doubt you will find her a tenth cousin of your own or something of that kind; for we Highlanders, you know, can trace our blood in a way that no other mortals can do; at all events you will find her of a gentler stamp than this little gipsy," pulling the dark brown curls of his pretty Maggie as he spoke, and gazing on her with all a father's pride.

"Then, I suppose I may take myself off," said pretty Maggie, tossing her magnificent brown curls with all a woman's coquetry; "three, you know, is no company, and all I hope, papa, is, that our gentle cousin may make a little more of your clever officer than I have done." And she looked mischievously from below her arched eye-brows at Sir Ronald.

Her father shook his head, and held up his finger; but he smiled, and turning, half apologetically, to his friend, said, "You would scarce believe it, Sir Ronald, but that little romp puts me wonderfully in mind of her mother when I first got acquainted with her, now nearly twenty years ago. Ah! time makes great changes."

The Colonel sighed—quite a little sigh; but the recollection, on the whole, seemed a happy one, for a bright gleam shone on his open, manly countenance.

"She is a beautiful girl," said Sir Ronald, who felt he must say something, but scarce knew what, for they were now quite near that statuesque-like figure, and Sir Ronald's emotions almost amounted to agony lest the fair creature, on raising her head, should have other features than those he so ardently longed to see.

But the suspense will soon be over, for every step brings them closer to the young girl. And yet—strange perversity of the human heart!—Sir Ronald would rather have preferred gazing for ever on that exquisite form, so closely resembling *hers*, than run the risk of breaking the spell by seeing the graceful head lifted. But this is now simply impossible, for already Colonel Gordon is by her side, already he is saying—did Sir Ronald's ears deceive him?—already he is saying, "Miss *Macdougal*, permit me to introduce to you a young brother officer of mine, (the fair face is lifted now)—Sir Ronald Macdonald!"

Sir Ronald bowed—a flush of intense delight crimsoned his forehead, as, bowing once more, he said, "This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Macdougal."

Violet held out her little hand, a rosy blush suffusing her marble cheek as she said, in words that sounded like music in Sir Ronald's ear, "Indeed it is!"

The Colonel looked from one young face to the other. He was somewhat perplexed. But there was no need of perplexity about it—pretty Maggie would speedily have solved the riddle. At last he said, addressing Sir Ronald, "You have met Miss Macdougal before?"

"Oh, yes," replied Sir Ronald, his fine eyes radiant with happiness, as he glanced towards Violet, "long ago before the war."

The Colonel's eyes were beginning to open to the real state of matters, and he said, with a merry laugh, "You see, Sir Ronald, my prophecy has become true. I told you you would very likely find Miss Macdougal a cousin. I would not risk much by making another, Sir Ronald, eh?"

Our young officer glanced with a look of uneasiness at Violet, and then, turning to the Colonel, he said, in an attempted playful tone, "Pray—pray no more prophecies at present."

"Ah, well! another time will do," and, with a knowing smile, the Colonel returned to welcome a little, sharp, intelligent man, with remarkably clear, dark restless eyes, who had just been announced as Mr. Russell. The little man bustled up to Mrs. Gordon with a thousand apologies for being late. "But really business——"

"Pray do not distress yourself," kindly interrupted Mrs. Gordon. "I know your little foible, dear coz, and always order dinner to be half-an-hour later than usual when you are expected."

"That is considerate and kind, my dear Mrs. Gordon, but you must allow me to say that on this particular occasion business—"

"Dinner's on the table," said the servant, entering at this moment, and putting a stop by this important announcement to the little lawyer's explanations. Colonel Gordon immediately walked up to the newly-found friends, and said, "I am sorry, Sir Ronald, to interrupt your tête-á-tête with our fair cousin here, but dinner waits. Will you be good enough to conduct Mrs. Gordon to the dining-room?"

"With pleasure," replied Sir Ronald, moving towards Mrs. Gordon; but we must confess that there was little pleasure about it, as our young officer would not have cared, in his present ecstatic state, though dinner had been deferred for twenty-four hours at least. The Colonel then gave his arm to Violet, the little bustling lawyer to pretty Maggie, while the two younger sisters brought up the rear.

The dinner being, as the host had said, without state or ceremony, was remarkable for nothing but the happiness which all seemed to feel, and the genial humour which pervaded the conversation. The host and hostess —rejoicing in their reunion after their long and trying separation, happy in each other, happy in their children

—presided, and their faces indicated the peace and contentment which reigned within. Their eldest daughter, Miss Maggie, was keeping her hand in practice, *faute de mieux*, by flirting with the middle-aged lawyer, and trying hard to win one tender glance from those dark restless-looking eyes; while Sir Ronald and Violet —but with *them*, reader, we must not intermeddle, lest our clumsy touch should dispel the rainbow hues which, even now, Hope and Love are weaving round their young and joyous hearts!

Dinner progresses. Soups disappear. Mrs. Gordon glances at her right-hand neighbour—she sees the glasses beside him still empty, and nothing but water in his tumbler. "You have no wine, Sir Ronald," she says, in a slight tone of surprise. "John, wine for Sir Ronald!"

"No, thank you," replies our hero; "I never take anything but water."

"Never! Well, that's too bad," said Mrs. Gordon. "There's my husband won't take a drop either. He discovered, when in the Crimea, that it was killing him by inches, and we can't prevail upon him to take so much as a single glassful since his return."

Colonel Gordon and Sir Ronald looked at each other, and smiled.

"Miss Macdougal there takes none either," continued Mrs. Gordon, in a would-be lamenting tone, "and I am under the disagreeable necessity of taking mine alone. O, thank you, Mr. Russell," she said, as that gentleman, hearing her complaint, replenished his glass, and bowing politely, raised it to his lips and drained it to the bottom. Oh, woman! tender, kind-hearted woman! for how much hast thou to account? In thy mistaken notions of hospitality how often hast thou proffered the enticing cup to some poor sinner, trembling on the verge of a precipice, and sent him from thy hospitable hearth to complete the work of destruction elsewhere, which thy one, or, it may be, thy two glasses of wine, thy pleading looks, and thy sweet voice have begun! To tell the truth, Mrs. Gordon did not care about wine, porter,

or any other liquor, and when alone scarcely ever touched one or other of them; but on company days, such was her respect for the good, old, hospitable, time-honoured customs of our forefathers, that, one would have thought, she made it the business of her life to see that her guests replenished their glasses, and did equal justice to her good wines and good cheer. You may well judge of her feelings at the present moment, then, when she saw her fine old wines untasted, and feared that Mr. Russell, who really enjoyed a glass of good wine, might feel himself insulted by her husband's determined abstinence. On this point, however, she might, had she known it, have kept her mind quite easy, for her worthy cousin had been too long a lawyer, to have many feelings left on any subject whatever, save, perhaps, a feeling of impatience at a stupid, tiresome, tedious client. So Mr. Russell took his wine and enjoyed the same, watching, meantime, with those remarkable eyes of his, every motion of Sir Ronald, in whom he seemed suddenly to take an extraordinary interest. Our young officer, at last, began to feel strangely embarrassed. Never did he look up but there were those mysterious restless eyes fixed upon him as if they would penetrate the most hidden recesses of his heart; and when he turned aside, entered into conversation, or looked downwards, still, still, he was strangely conscious of the fascination of those dark orbs. At last much to his relief, dinner was over, dessert placed on the table, and shortly afterwards the ladies withdrew. Though there was nothing afterwards to prevent Colonel Gordon and Sir Ronald from following their example, yet, out of civility, they remained with Mr. Russell while he swallowed his usual quantity of wine, and a most respectable, or rather, we ought to say, disrespectable, quantity it was. Sir Ronald opened his eyes in perfect astonishment; he had never seen any one drink so much without appearing to suffer from it, and looked every minute to see the wine-bibber fall down below the table.

But no, there he sits, calm, collected, and composed, talking fluently, nay, perspicuously on every subject, and

occasionally displaying scintillations of wit which the most brilliant might envy. Patience, Sir Ronald, the end will come by-and-by. You and the world will be startled by seeing in the morning prints:—"Awfully sudden death of the eminent lawyer, Mr. So-and-So. The deceased was in perfect health on the evening preceding his death, but not appearing in the morning at his usual hour, the domestics became alarmed, and entering his room found their beloved master reclining in his chair quite dead! The physicians considered apoplexy the cause of his death." Aye, apoplexy, heart disease—anything but the real thing—*too much wine.*

In the middle of a general conversation on indifferent topics, Mr. Russell suddenly stopped, fixed his eyes full on Sir Ronald's face, and said, "And have you never, Sir Ronald, tasted wine, whisky, brandy, beer, porter, or any intoxicating liquor whatever, since you attained the years of discretion?"

Sir Ronald smiled. "Never!"

"Most extraordinary! I wish I could say the same; and you are the only son of the late Sir Ronald Macdonald of Glenrora?"

"I am."

"What in the world's this?" broke in Colonel Gordon. "You are examining my young friend as if he were in the witness-box." And our host began to fear that perhaps, after all, the little lawyer was *Bacchi plenus.* Not at all. You are mistaken, Colonel; the little lawyer has all his wits about him yet, and is following up the scent with the keenness of a sleuth-hound.

"Wait a bit, Colonel, if you please," said he, impatiently. "I suppose you would have no objection to swear to these facts in open Court, Sir Ronald?"

"Not at all, if it were to be the means of doing good."

"The means of doing good! I should rather think so. 'Pon my word, you're a lucky dog!" and the lawyer surveyed our handsome officer from top to toe with his keen eyes, as if endeavouring to take his mental qualifications from his physical standard. After doing this for some

time, at which Sir Ronald was rather amused than otherwise, he continued his interrogations—

"What was your mother's name—do you remember?"

Once more the Colonel interrupted him—"Mr. Russell, you are carrying this joke too far. I cannot permit my young friend, under my roof, to be examined as if he were a foundling picked up in the street."

Mr. Russell knitted his brows with anger. "I really wish, Colonel, you would not interrupt me. Now, Sir Ronald, what was your mother's name?"

"I could tell you," said Sir Ronald, good naturedly, but lawyers, I believe, prefer seeing to hearing." So saying, he drew out his mother's precious bullet-pierced Bible from his breast, and opening it at the fly-leaf, he handed it to Mr. Russell, saying, "Here, sir, is my venerated, early-lost mother's name."

The lawyer took the Bible in his hand. Making no remark on its shattered condition, he fixed his keen eyes on the name, which was most legibly written; he drew out his glass and examined the characters in every possible position; then returning the book to Sir Ronald, he said, in his usual calm voice, from which every trace of his former eagerness seemed to have vanished. "Thank you, Sir Ronald; that will do."

Our officer took his precious Bible, replaced it in his bosom, and went to the drawing-room to join the ladies.

Here he was immediately accosted with Maggie's merry laugh, and "Ah, you truant knight, if I were cousin Violet I would not speak one word to you this evening, staying so long prosing with two old gentlemen, while your lady-love has been pining for you. Nay, you need not blush cousin Violet, for I know all about it; don't I, Sir Ronald?" giving our young soldier one of her most mischievous glances; "engaged five years ago in that moonlit glade in Glenrora! Ah, you see, I know," she continued, holding up her rosy-tipped finger knowingly to Violet.

Poor Violet was rather at a loss how to meet this lively badinage of this lively little flirt; but Sir Ronald

came to her rescue, and truly pretty Maggie had no reason to complain that his wit was not as sharp as her own now, for a change had passed over Sir Ronald that eyes not nearly as sharp as Maggie's could plainly discover, and, with a merry smile, he made answer to merry Maggie, "Pity it was not *you* in the moonlight glade that night. I'm sure you would have taught me love-making in the most approved fashion! Only let me see—five years ago! Why, you would scarce have attained the years of discretion. Take five from fifteen, and ten remains. Oh! my dear Miss Gordon, I see it would never have done. Why, at that time you were in the nursery eating bread and butter!"

Even the gentle Violet could not refrain from smiling at this sally; but Miss Maggie tossed her head, and pretended to pout, which we rather think was no pretence, but a reality; and if her feelings were somewhat hurt, in our opinion she rather deserved it, because she never did care one straw about the feelings of others.

Maggie was preparing once more to return fire, when Monsieur le Père entered, and, walking right up to Sir Ronald, said, "My dear fellow, this seems the most extraordinary night in my life. Mysteries are never to cease, I think. Would you speak a few moments to my friend, Mr. Russell, in my library? I would have apologised for his rudeness, but I think what he has to tell you will more than excuse all. Come this way."

The Colonel was looking grave, but there was a cheerfulness in the tone of his voice, and a brightness in his eye, which convinced Sir Ronald that, whatever the lawyer might have to say, it would not be unpleasant. So, without any remark, he followed Colonel Gordon to the door of his study, into which having ushered him, the Colonel withdrew.

As soon as he entered, the lawyer, who was sitting in an easy chair before the fire, buried in deep meditation, sprang to his feet, came forward to meet him, and then, wheeling another chair near the fire, begged Sir Ronald to be seated, "for (he continued) I have a long and somewhat strange story to tell."

Sir Ronald sat down, marvelling at the sudden change in the little lawyer from the almost rude to the very polite, and without further remark Mr. Russell began—

"You possibly may have heard of your maternal grandfather—possibly not. At all events, he was one of those wonderful men who, in this busy age of ours, are always surging to the surface. Born in the meanest rank of society, and beginning life as a street porter, or something of that kind, he managed, by dint of extraordinary care, shrewdness, and, I must say, talent, to amass a great amount of wealth, and to seat himself among the princes of the city. But, though blessed with wealth, your grandfather was unfortunate in his family. Of six fine sons, whom he had expected to keep up the name, and hand down his hard-won gold to posterity, all died ere they reached manhood, leaving to the old man one delicate daughter—the last legacy bequeathed to him by his dying wife. Round this fair child all your grandfather's affections now entwined themselves. And as she grew up in beauty, his pride in her knew no bounds; no money was spared on her education, and she was fit—both by nature, manners, and fortune—to take her position among the high-born ladies of the land. But she was of obscure origin. Oh! that could be easily remedied. Her father was so rich that he doubted not many a youth, rich in blood and ancient descent, would be tempted with his pretty Mary's dowry. And his prediction came true. Your father, a ruined chieftain, was caught by the fortune of the rich heiress. He wooed—he won her. She gave him her heart. He gave her his hand, for his heart, if he ever had one, had been frittered away in a thousand heartless follies. But there is no need to trace the end of this sad marriage. Your father was a drunkard; he used your mother ill; she died of a broken heart."

Ronald winced, but he spoke not; he felt the lawyer's statements were but too true.

"Your grandfather," Mr. Russell continued, "returned from her funeral, stung to the heart, tore up his will, and caused me, who was his man of business, and then resi-

dent in London, to draw up another, and a more extraordinary will I never drew up in my life. It was to this effect:—'That the whole of his vast wealth was to go to distant and very poor relations, provided first, that his beloved daughter's only son was dead; provided second, that her husband, Sir Ronald, was still alive; and provided third, that the son of his beloved Mary had never tasted wine or strong liquors.' I suggested that this fact should be communicated to those who had charge of the boy, that he might at least have a fair chance. But the old man was inflexible, so I gave up all hopes of ever seeing you touch a penny of the vast wealth which was lawfully yours. From that day your grandfather became a strong abstainer—broke all his decanters—poured out upon the ground his valuable stock of wines. If spoken to on the subject, he had just one answer—'Drink had killed his Mary!' I have just returned from London, where I have been attending his funeral, and where, in presence of witnesses, I opened the old man's will. It was the same I made for him after your mother's death. This evening I intended writing to make inquiries about you, but a special providence has intervened, and allow me, Sir Ronald," said Mr. Russell, rising from his chair, "to be the first to congratulate you on the possession of the princely fortune to which you have just fallen heir, amounting to about £200,000."

Sir Ronald took the proffered hand, but did not speak. It was almost too much for our young officer. After breathing a silent prayer for guidance in the unexpected circumstances in which he was placed, he pressed the lawyer's hand, thanked him for the interest he had taken in him and his fortunes, hoped that he would be enabled to use it aright, and then raising his fine eyes from the ground where he had kept them, he exclaimed, "Under God, I owe this to M'Nab!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE WEDDING.

THE news of Sir Ronald's good fortune sped like wildfire. What a lucky dog he was! Congratulations poured in upon him from every side. Old friends, true friends, and friends whom he had scarce known till now, when the sun of his prosperity had so unexpectedly reached its zenith, rivalled each other in their good wishes; but not one of these compliments, clothed in the most polished language though it was, moved our hero so much as the simple remarks of his men, who respected, loved, and revered him. One morning after parade, a soldier, in whom our young officer had taken great interest, and whom he had saved from a drunkard's fate, came up with the usual military salute, and then lingered in the neighbourhood of his captain as if wishing to be spoken to. Sir Ronald, noticing this, went up and accosted him. "Well, Robert, have you anything to tell me this morning? I hope you are always keeping sober, my man?"

"Oh, yes, Captain, thanks to you for showing me the way. But what I would like to know, sir, just from your own lips—you'll excuse the liberty I'm taking, Captain—is, if it's quite true that you've got sich an awfu' lot o' money left you, as folks say?"

Sir Ronald smiled. "Oh, yes, Robert, it's quite true; but why, my good fellow, what's this? You look as if you were going to cry over my good fortune. Why, man, you should rather laugh."

"I know I should," said the poor fellow, now almost blubbering outright—"I know I should, but you will be leaving us, Captain, and then what will become o' us?"

"Yes, Robert," said Sir Ronald, "I am about to leave, my duty calls me elsewhere; but I will never forget you nor the gallant Highlanders; and should our country ever require it, this strong arm, and this good sword"—putting his hand upon it as he spoke—"will be at her service, and I will once more be at your side to march, as we have done before, to victory!"

"I believe you, Captain, said Robert; "indeed, I'm shure on't, for you're never the one to leave the country, or any one else, in the lurch. I'll never forget, Captain, how you watched by my bedside when I was knocked down with cholery in the hospital in that dirty Balaklava, and how you read and prayed with me, and how you told me about that cursed drink that made me 'list and nearly break my poor widowed mother's heart. But she's happy now, sir, for you see, since I turned sober, I am always able to send her something, an' I got sich a beautiful letter from her, an' she says she thinks more of my pound than tho' it wor' thousands o' thousands, for it shows her that I'm behavin', and it makes her heart glad. An' oh, sir, I owe all this an' more to your honour, an' while I live I'll never, never forget all your kindness—*never*. An' now, Captain, I must wish you 'ealth and 'appiness to enjoy your gran' fortune; but eh! sir, what'll become o' us when you're gone?"

"Robert," said Sir Ronald, solemnly, "all my instructions have been of little avail if they have not taught you where your great strength lies. What am I but a poor, weak, erring mortal like yourself? Take the Bible for your guide, Robert, and ask God to give you strength to flee from temptation, and all will be well." Sir Ronald laid his hand kindly on the poor fellow's shoulder as he spoke. "Think on what I've said, and remember, should you ever be in difficulty or distress, you will always find a friend in Sir Ronald Macdonald." He held out his hand; the poor soldier clasped it in both of his; he bent his head till his lips touched it. "Farewell, my man!" said Sir Ronald.

"Farewell! sir, farewell! May Almighty God bless

and reward you for your—." The poor fellow was fairly overcome, and walked away to conceal his emotion.

On the morning after the dinner party Sir Ronald called at Colonel Gordon's house—aye, and for that matter, as the reader will have no difficulty in understanding, on the next, and the next, and the next, and the next, till the days passed into weeks, and the weeks into months; and during this long period he read and chatted, walked and rode with Violet—learned something of the grief she had endured, for Violet could speak of it now, at least to Sir Ronald, who could sympathise with her so fully; learned something, also, of her anxiety about her young brother, Louis, who, having passed with honours at Cambridge, had just come to Edinburgh to prosecute the study of law, and in whom Sir Ronald took as much interest as she did herself, and to whom he lost no opportunity of giving sage and sound counsel. But, if truth must be told, Louis found a much more pleasant counseller than either Sir Ronald or Violet in the flirting, merry, pretty Maggie, who, notwithstanding her dash of wicked fun, had much of her father's good sense; and who, when love once entered her little breast, became quite staid—at least for her. Louis gave himself up, neck and heel, to the fascinations of the little flirt, and it would be difficult to tell the happiness that reigned in that drawing-room during the long nights of dreary winter. Colonel Gordon, eminently a domestic man, declared it made him quite young again; while Mrs. Gordon, whose sharp eyes soon saw the little game going on between Louis and her daughter, determined, like a prudent woman, not to mar or meddle. She had made what is called a love match herself, being engaged to the Colonel, then a penniless ensign, when little more than Maggie's age, and she never had reason to regret her choice. Like most women who have done so, she entertained very decided opinions against prudent, worldly, and mercenary marriages, "Always feeling," she declared, "something of contempt for people—especially men, who married for money!" To this opinion she not unfrequently treated her husband in the absence of the

young people, and fortunately, he was quite ready to agree with her, especially when laying her soft white hand on his, and turning up her still beautiful eyes in his face, she would say, "I am sure, love, we found a love marriage the right thing in our case!" So it was a mutually understood thing between husband and wife that when Louis requested their sanction for entering into an engagement with their "pretty Maggie," it should be granted, the Colonel making one stipulation, which his wife thinks awfully absurd, but from which all her witchery, kissing, or coaxing will not move him! The stipulation is, "that before being allowed to enter into an engagement with his daughter, he do solemnly pledge himself to abstain for ever from all intoxicating liquors."

Bravo! Colonel; you've hit upon the true plan. The young fellow will take that pledge, or any other you may impose upon him, fast enough. What cares he at present, for all the brandy, wine, or whisky in the universe? He would empty them all into the sea to-morrow for one glance of your merry daughter's dark eyes! And in all seriousness we cannot help thinking that if fathers were as anxious upon this point as they are about securing the marriage settlements of their daughters, they would take a more effectual means of ensuring their happiness than all their well-meant efforts have hitherto accomplished.

But those happy days could not last for ever. Three months had already passed; Sir Ronald had resigned his commission, and had no longer any excuse for remaining in Edinburgh in idleness—pleasant flowery idleness though it was. He had sketched out a different life for himself. Glenrora had been re-purchased, with one or two smaller properties lying contiguous. M'Nab, who, in the pride of his heart, had at once give up his own business to go to the old place and superintend his young master's interests there, wrote him that everything about the estate was out of order and going to decay.

Mr. Macdougal had never taken much interest in the management of his estate; so long as the castle and grounds were kept in good order, he cared not that the

houses of the tenantry were tumbling down, the roofs letting in water, and the out-buildings in ruin. He committed the care of all these things to selfish, unprincipled servants, who thought only of themselves, fattening on their master's money, while they neglected that master's interests. But all this must come to an end now. Sir Ronald felt his responsibilities—felt that he had been made the steward of such great wealth, not for his own selfish indulgence merely, but to promote the happiness and moral well-being of those around him. And so we have said those pleasant flowery days of idleness must come to an end. Louis must leave off his constant flirting with pretty Maggie, and go and study law, and read hard, and think hard, and sit up late, and only pay his charmer a visit occasionally, if he means to get on and get to the top of his profession, and make himself worthy of her. And Sir Ronald? Well, his fortune's made for him, but he intends to try and make a good use of it: and he must needs go and see to plans for making roads, draining moors, building homesteads, pulling down hovels, and erecting instead comfortable cottages for the labourers on the estate; he must plant the hill-sides, direct the mountain streams, build bridges, and cultivate meadows; but besides, and beyond all this, he must attend to the social welfare of his people. Surely those faithful creatures, whose ancestors showed such love and respect to his own foolish, tyrannical forefathers, deserve well at his hands! Yes, Sir Ronald has many plans for *their* comfort, and, if God spare him, he will carry them out; but he must begin *now*—the sunny days of idleness must come to an end. And well it should be so, else their sunshine would soon die away, their flowers wither, and their pleasure become *ennui*. Man is made for labour, and that man is happiest who best performs that labour, and who performs it, not merely for his own selfish ends, but from the higher motives of love to man and love to his Maker. But must Sir Ronald part from Violet? *Pas de tout.*

One morning Sir Ronald called as usual at his friend's house; his mind was now made up to leave town in a week or two. The tall, red-haired footman admitted him, as usual, with his accustomed smile; this morning, however, his smile seemed peculiarly bright. To the usual enquiry, "Is Mrs. Gordon at home?" the man answers, "No, sir, but—;" and without finishing his reply he ushers Sir Ronald, with a knowing smile, into the drawing-room. Ah, those servants! they know all our affairs as well as we do ourselves, sometimes better! Sir Ronald enters the drawing-room. There is no one in it, but, at a work-table, busied with a piece of embroidery, sits one female figure; she raises her head as the door is opened—a rosy blush suffuses her fair, but now healthful cheek, as her eye falls upon our young friend—she rises to meet him, and extends her little hand—Sir Ronald takes it, and raises it respectfully to his lips—Violet blushes more deeply than before, but she smiles, and does not withdraw it. Sir Ronald sits down beside her, takes up her embroidery, and makes some wonderfully wise remarks upon it, seeing he has turned it upside down! asks in an indifferent tone for Mrs. Gordon, and learns, to his intense delight, that she and her daughters have driven out to do some shopping, and will not return for three or four hours at least. What a chance for Sir Ronald! He has been waiting for it long, but now that he has it, strange to say, he seems in no hurry to take advantage of it. The conversation turns almost entirely on the most common-place topics. But there is a throb, throbbing, at Sir Ronald's heart that makes him speak of those common-place things in an unnatural and flurried manner; and a strange consciousness about Violet which makes her tremble and bend over her embroidery with crimsoned cheek, while the needle flies through her little fingers at a rate it has never done before. At last Sir Ronald says "Violet!" What makes her start, tremble, and blush deeper than ever? There is nothing new in Sir Ronald calling her Violet—he has done so now for some time, and

she has paid no great attention to it; but *now* there is a depth and a fervour in the tone that goes straight to her heart, and though he had never spoken another word on the subject, Violet would have known that he loved her—loved her as his own soul—loved her more than life itself! And now, that the ice is broken, Sir Ronald finds plenty of words—eloquent, passionate, pleading words; and in his youthful loving impetuosity would have taken the fair maiden's heart by storm, had it been necessary, which we all know it was not, as there was a little traitor within the citadel, waiting and watching for an opportunity to give up the keys!

And the keys were given up, and most gratefully received by our gallant knight, there and then, and before he left that drawing-room every thing was settled, down to the marriage day, which was to be in two short months. Sir Ronald, having settled this all-important business, managed to make his escape before Mrs. Gordon's return. His heart was so brimful of happiness, that he could not have behaved in an ordinary way—at least he thought so—and it was quite a relief to him to get to his own room, that he might be at full liberty to indulge in his own delightful meditations.

During the interval that must elapse before his marriage, Sir Ronald paid a visit to Glenrora, and set about some of the more necessary improvements immediately. With Mr. Graham, from whose lips he learned, in all the details, the horrid tragedy which had been enacted within its walls, he went through the Castle, and it would be difficult to express his horror when he stood in the room where the mother of his own Violet had been so cruelly murdered, and marked the dark stains of her life's blood still visible in the wainscot! The strong young man wept like a child when he thought of all the agony and grief Violet's tender, gentle heart had endured, and in his manly, loving soul, he vowed, as far as lay in human power, to save her bruised and broken spirit from one more sorrow. Both Mr. Graham and he felt that it would

never do to bring Violet to Glenrora in its present state; so the Castle was immediately put in the hands of a clever architect, under whose direction the whole suite of apartments, occupied by the Macdougals, and which formed a kind of wing, was pulled down, and a large, light hall, entering on a conservatory, erected on the spot. And this change was effected with so much good taste, and the old Gothic style of the Castle was so carefully preserved, that the eye could scarcely discover that any change whatever had been made in the original building.

The wedding took place in the lovely month of April, and the day was as auspicious as April sunshine, intermingled with April showers, could make it. In accordance with Violet's wish, Mr. Graham came to town, and performed the ceremony after the good Scotch fashion, in the house of Colonel Gordon. Mrs. Graham accompanied her husband, and her loving heart was filled with rapture as she witnessed the happiness of Violet and Sir Ronald, and thought of all the misery she had, in her short life, undergone, which now she fondly hoped had for ever passed away. Colonel Gordon gave the blushing bride away; pretty Maggie acted as principal bridesmaid, but there was quite a bevy of fair young girls besides, grouped round the graceful, peerless, Violet, as she plighted her virgin troth to the brave Sir Ronald.

Louis was groomsman, and we are almost ashamed to confess, that in the very midst of the solemn ceremony, he and Maggie were holding a quiet flirtation with their eyes! It is to be hoped that they will learn more sense as they get older. Worthy old M'Nab was at that marriage too; and not as a dependant, but as a friend, esteemed and honoured. And if a happy heart was present there, it was his. We question if even Sir Ronald, in the full pride of noble joyous manhood, with the bride of his choice, about to become his own for ever, at his side, felt such intense pleasure as this venerable man standing on the verge of the grave, gazing with tears of joy and

gratitude upon "his boy," and thanking God for all he had done for him, and for blessing his feeble instrumentality in leading him in the paths of temperance and virtue. The ceremony ended, the happy bride and bridegroom, amidst showers of good wishes, set off to spend a few months in the principal cities of the Continent.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

It was drawing towards evening on a day about the beginning of August, when groups of villagers, all arrayed in their "Sunday's best," might be seen lounging about the village of Glenrora, standing at the gates of the Castle grounds, or walking in detached companies along the great south road, in the hopes of catching the first glimpse of the carriage conveying Sir Ronald and his lady, that they might give the signal to the others who were waiting to give the son of their chieftain a Highland welcome. The day, which had been beautiful, had been kept as a holiday in the village and neighbourhood; a large marquee had been erected in the Castle grounds, and a sumptuous dinner spread out for all comers—M'Nab, of course, presiding. But there was one thing wanting—the reader will have no difficulty in guessing what it was—and this one thing, the Highlanders being drouthy customers, was very much missed, and various remarks went round on the omission. But these remarks were speedily subdued when M'Nab rose, and, in his own graphic way, reminded them of the painful incidents which had happened lately, and with which they were so sadly familiar. And when, at last, he ventured to refer to the death of the last chieftain, and to ask, "what sent *him* raging mad down into the depths of Glenrora?" it would be impossible to describe the effect produced. The men wrung their hands, while the women wept, and wailed, and rocked their bodies, as

they always do in moments of intense agony; it was more like a funeral lamentation than a season of festivity. "But weeping may endure for a night—joy cometh with the morning." Better the sorrow and the grief than the the riotous uproar that would have arisen had intoxicating liquor been supplied to them.

Coffee was then brought in large cups—rich, fragrant, steaming coffee, which filled the whole place with its aroma. There was tea also for those who might prefer it. The men tasted, drank, and enjoyed it. Audible remarks were made on the excellence of the coffee, and the wonderful flavour of the tea. "Aye, aye," said some of the more outspoken, "gif we could only get tea or coffee like this, there's no yane o' us wad fash the speerits mickle, am thinkin'; but stuff like this is no for hard-working foulk like us, its only for rich lairds and gran' leddies."

"By no means, my good friends," said M'Nab, who happened to overhear some of these remarks; "it's such stuff as that which hard-working people like you ought to drink, and let me tell you, you have more need of it than all the lairds and leddies in the world."

"Aye, aye, that may be; but you see we canna afford it."

"There again you are wrong, my good friends," replied M'Nab; "you are far more able to afford it than you are to afford whisky, and it would do you infinitely more good—more good do I say? I am wrong there, it would do you nothing but good, whereas whisky does you nothing but evil."

The men looked at each other, and a somewhat incredulous expression hung upon their faces.

"You don't believe me, I see," and M'Nab smiled.

"We are willing enough to believe you about the coffee being better for us than whisky; but as for it being cheaper, we can't see that at all."

"Oh, I will soon show you that," said M'Nab; "a glass of whisky costs about threepence—and no great thing it is at that price; if you get it cheaper, it is more

vitriol and water than whisky. Now, a large cup of fine coffee, like that you have just had, costs not quite a penny. Now, my lads, what do you say to that?"

The men were silent; they looked at one another in astonishment. Living as they did in a comparatively remote part of the country, they had not the amount of information common to operatives in our large towns. They were quite willing to live in the simple ignorance of their fathers, who considered tea and coffee as almost unknown luxuries, while whisky was looked upon as a necessary of life. May this fact not throw some light on the real cause of the idleness, the sloth, and the dirt, for which the natives of our highland regions have been long so notorious? But, while we speak, the sun is veering to the west, the shrill strains of the bagpipe are heard, there is a commotion outside the tent, the cannon booms from a mountain battery—Mr. Graham and M'Nab start to their feet, the tent is empty in an instant; the cry of "The Laird! the Laird!" is heard on every side. And true enough, there he is. In an open carriage, drawn by a pair of fine, high-mettled horses, sits Sir Ronald, his noble brow uncovered, acknowledging with bows and smiles the shouts and hurrahs which greet his approach. By his side sits Violet, his young wife, in her peerless beauty, most becomingly dressed in almost bridal robes. As the carriage moves but slowly, you can see the rose-blush on her cheek, deepening with every successive acclamation, and you can see the purple of her eye darkening more and more with emotion, as she ever and anon gazed with looks of pride and love upon the husband of her heart. And now they enter the gate, and drive up slowly the approach to his ancestral home!—the home so lately hers, now to be hers once more, but under such different circumstances? The shadows of the past are already sweeping o'er her heart, and chilling with their icy breath the raptures of her young breast. Already the light is fading from her soft eye—already the rose on her cheek is fading. Sir Ronald turns to point out a familiar object: he marks the change, he

guesses the cause, he is in agony; he clasps her hand—"Violet, dearest, for my sake, love, have courage!" A faint smile flits over her face; the acclamations continue, but Sir Ronald hears them not now; all his attention is concentrated upon Violet. He speaks softly in her ear words of hope and comfort. And now the carriage stops; they are at the Castle entrance.

When the carriage stopped, Sir Ronald scarce waited till the door was opened, but, springing out, lifted the drooping Violet from her seat. In an instant she was in the arms of Mrs. Graham, who conducted her at once to the apartments prepared for her. In a short time her spirits rallied. She could not fail to mark and appreciate the taste with which all had been fitted up for her reception. No object that could suggest one gloomy association had been allowed to remain, but all as fresh, light, and elegant as money, taste, and hands could make it. After she had rested about a quarter of an hour, and had taken a cup of tea, Sir Ronald entered. He saw at a glance that her composure had returned, but wisely making no remark on the subject, he said "Violet, dearest, the people are still there in crowds, and M'Nab says they will wait till midnight if we do not make our appearance; do you feel inclined to go?"

"Certainly," said Violet, rising, and placing her hand in his arm, "I shall go at once."

Sir Ronald smiled, gave her a glance of affection, and led her out to the terrace in front of the Castle. You should have heard the shouts then—the hurrahs, repeated and repeated, till the mountains caught the echoes! You should have seen the waving of hats, hands, and handkerchiefs; the flinging up of blue bonnets, and the tremendous enthusiasm that prevailed. You should have heard the good, kind words, Sir Ronald spoke to them; how he thanked them for the fidelity that they and theirs had ever shown to his ancient house; how he hoped he should never be forgetful of their best interests, and how he hoped, under God, they would prove a comfort and a blessing to each other in their respective

spheres. And then the welkin rang again—and then three cheers and one more were given for his bonny "leddy," after acknowledging which Sir Ronald and his lady retired, and the crowds slowly dispersed to their homes, and the sun went down, and the large, full moon rose in the deep cloudless sky, high above the mountains, and holy peace rested on Glenrora.

* * * * * * *

Not more than three years have passed, reader, since the evening we have last described; but were you to visit Glenrora now, you would scarce recognise it. The old wretched village of hovels has been entirely swept away. Nice neat cottages, each containing at least two rooms, have been built instead. They are placed a few roods back from the road, and each has, in this way, a small patch of ground as a flower plot in front; for the dunghills and the pigs have all been banished to the remotest corner of the back garden. Right in the centre of the village, just on the spot where the old "White Eagle" used to stand, may be seen a comfortable Temperance Hotel, with a reading-room, where a new newspaper may always be had, a nice warm cup of coffee, and a comfortable bit of dinner, too, for that matter, when it is required. In all his endeavours for the social improvement of his people, Sir Ronald has been most ably assisted by his wife and Mrs. Graham. Under the auspices of these ladies, a common kitchen has been fitted up for the use of the village, where good, nourishing soup is always made, and sold at so much a pint; where little delicacies may also be prepared at a moderate price for the sick and for infants; but from which nothing is given without payment, Sir Ronald dreading above all things the risk of increasing pauperism. Into this kitchen the smartest of the young girls in the village are admitted and under the care of a skilful matron are taught to cook, wash, iron, scrub, and do all those things which are required to fit them for good domestic servants, or for taking care of their own houses, and making happy and comfortable homes for their husbands and families;

and by this little scheme the Lady of Glenrora hopes to strike at one of the great roots of evil, feeling that while the wife of our working man is nothing but a slut, not able, with all his hard-won wages, to prepare him one comfortable morsel of food—keeping his house as dirty, untidy, and unpleasant as possible, the temptations to go to the clean public-house, with its bright fire, tidy hearth, and shining furniture, must of necessity be very great.

Prizes are given twice a year for the tidiest cottages, and prizes for the best flowers and vegetables grown in the cottage plots; and it is pleasant in the long summer evenings to mark the peasant, his day's labour done, transplanting, or watering, or shading some pet carnation in anticipation of the coming show; while his yellow-haired daughter, knitting in hand, lilts a merry song beside him, and his tidy wife, with a crowing infant in her arms, gives her opinion on the comparative merits of rose and carnation. No slip-shod, tattered, dirty women now—no naked children inch-thick with mud—but above all, no dissipated, blotched, blear-eyed looking men, staggering through the village, or lounging in dirty laziness, surrounded with fumes of tobacco smoke. Coffee has supplanted whisky in most of the houses, and all the inhabitants have experienced the beneficial result. It cost a little struggle at first, but it was soon over. And on these points Sir Ronald was determined—that no public-house should exist on his property, and that no drunkard should pollute the moral atmosphere of Glenrora.

Nor is happiness confined to the village. In the Castle the prattle of infant voices may now be heard, the large nursery is once more in use, and Sir Ronald and his sweet wife, happy in themselves, happy in each other, are daily and hourly enjoying the sweetest of luxuries—the luxury of being and doing good.

THE END.

HILL AND HALDEN, PRINTERS, STAFFORD.

